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Rita Wick-Nelson
(Agent of Receiving Organization)

Ottus E. Chatman
(Donor)

October 8, 1999
(Date)

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS WITH
MRS. OTTRUS CHATMAN**

September 28 and October 8, 1999

Logan, West Virginia

Interviewers: Rita-Wicks Nelson, Ph.D., Ancella Radford Bickley, Ed.D.

Transcriptionist: Julie Lewis

RW-N: 1999. We're at the home of Mrs. Ottrus Chatman in Logan, West Virginia. Ancella Bickley and Rita Wicks-Nelson are interviewing.

AB: Today is September 28, 1999.

RW-N: You got Ancella's letter, I think, explaining the project, but do you want me to go over it quickly?

OC: Would you please?

RW-N: Yeah, okay. We started 2 and half years ago. . . [tape stopped]

AB: Mrs. Chatman, tell us where you're originally from.

OC: I am originally from Fayette County, West Virginia, Montgomery. I was born in a little coal mining town, Cannelton, West Virginia, about 3 miles from Montgomery.

AB: And did you go to school uh there in . . .

OC: I did. I went to school in Fayette County and you may know that, uh, Fayette Coun- uh, Montgomery is in 2 counties, Fayette and Kanawha. So I went to school in Fayette County as well as Kanawha County. Uh, Simmons High School is the school where I graduated. I also attended Washington High School in London, West Virginia for 3 years, but I graduated from Simmons as salutatorian in the class. I attended West Virginia State College.

RW-N: Where is Simmons located?

OC: In Montgomery.

RW-N: It was in Montgomery.

OC: Montgomery. Now I think a tennis court is on that location; in fact, it's in the area of West Virginia Institute of Technology.

AB: And what about your parents? Um. (OC: My parents...)Where are they from?

OC: My parents, my parents were from -- [coughs] I'm sorry -- my mother was a native of North Carolina and my father, Mississippi. James Burke was his name and my mother Josephine Price Burke.

AB: And what brought them to West Virginia?

OC: I have no idea except perhaps for better opportunities. I, I, I do remember hearing my mother say that, that, that uh, my father had a little education and there were times when the teacher was absent, they would leave him in charge of the school. And that was how they met and sort of fell in love and married, but, uh . . .

RW-N: Now this was in North Carolina?

OC: This was in West Virginia. They came to West Virginia when my mother was maybe 10, 15 years old.

AB: So her parents brought her to West Virginia as a child?

OC: Brought her to West Virginia as a child from North Carolina, a little town, I think they call it Leeksville, North Carolina?

RW-N: Would that be L-e-e-k?

OC: L-e-i-k-s or L-i-e, one or the other, I'm not sure.

RW-N: And now did your father also come from North Carolina?

OC: My father's family came from Virginia, but for some reason or other, he was born in Mississippi. ^{But} most all of, all of the relatives were from, uh, Virginia; in fact, they came from Virginia to West Virginia. My great-grandmother lived in Montgomery until her death at 104. And, and a daughter, uh, in the 90's, they were all long . . .

RW-N: Now this was your father's family?

OC: My father's family.

RW-N: And their name was what?

OC: Burke, (R.W-N. They -Oh...) Burke.

RW-N: They're the Burkes.

OC: Wheeler.

AB: So you don't know what brought them to West Virginia though?

OC: No, I don't.

AB: Maybe opportunity?

OC: Opportunities for employment or whatever, better living. I, I really don't know what brought them.

AB: And your father went to school uh for a time in West Virginia?

OC: For a time in West Virginia. Now a -- as, as I understand it, they, his family lived in the area of Charleston. In fact, I had an aunt who was an R.N. in, uh, Charleston and uh, uh, the uncle, her, her brother attended West Virginia State, but my father being the oldest did not go to, to college.

AB: Uh-huh. And what about your mother? How far did she go in school?

OC: 6th grade.

AB: To the 6th grade.

OC: 6th grade.

AB: And they married in Montgomery?

OC: In Montgomery.

AB: And do you have sisters and brothers?

OC: I have no sisters, no brothers. I did have a sister who died, uh, oh, perhaps, she was about 18 months old. I don't even remember her except from a picture. My brother died about 5 years ago. (A.B.: Mmm hmm) He was a retired army officer. And he died in Nashville, Tennessee after his retirement.

AB: But you two were reared just the 2 of you together?

OC: Right.

AB: In Montgomery?

OC: In Montgomery.

AB: Mmm-hmm. And how did your father make his living?

OC: Coal mining.

AB: He was a miner.

OC: Right.

AB: And did he work in the Cannelton mine or where?

OC: He worked in the Cannelton mine and, and in Kanawha County, a little, little community called Sharon and, uh, Paint Creek, somewhere along in there when we were kids growing up.

AB: Did your mother work?

OC: Yes, she did. She worked and worked very hard. She worked, uh, for private families, mostly Jewish families.

AB: There in Montgomery?

OC: In Montgomery.

AB: And what about you? Did you work in high school, while you were in high school or so?

OC: No, maybe a little babysitting or something like that, but no regular employment or anything

like that.

AB: What about your brother?

OC: He didn't. He didn't. He, he went to. . . He quit school as a senior and joined the Army and made the Army his career till he retired.

AB: Now you started elementary school, uh, where?

OC: In Montgomery.

AB: At Simmons?

OC: At Simmons.

AB: And you went to Simmons from the 1st through what?

OC: Oh, through about maybe 5th, 6th grades. 6th -- 1st through 6th. Because 7th, 8th, and 9th, the family moved to a little town called Union, right out of Montgomery (AB: Mmm-hmm), and we were in Kanawha County. You remember I said how it was divided? (AB: Mmm-hmm) So then I went to school in London (AB: Mmm-hmm) for 7th, 8th, and 9th. (AB: Mmm-hmm) And uh when I went into the 10th grade, my mother was working at, with this private family and she allowed me to room with a friend of hers. And this lady lived in Montgomery so I went to Simmons.

AB: So you went back to Simmons?

OC: Went back to Simmons until I graduated.

AB: And graduated from Simmons?

OC: Right.

AB: And when, uh, was that? Do you remember the year you graduated from Simmons?

OC: 1933.

AB: 1933.

OC: Yes.

RW-N: Can we have your birthdate?

OC: June 26th, 1915. I'm 84.

AB: You're a wonderful 84 [chuckles].

OC: Think so? Oh, gosh.

AB: Absolutely, absolutely.

OC: I'll be 85 my birthday.

AB: Now when you graduated from Simmons, what did you do?

OC: I went to West Virginia State.

AB: And did you live on campus?

OC: I did.

AB: Where?

OC: In MacCorkle Hall.

AB: Mmm-hmm.

OC: But then I could only stay there 1 year because now that was during the Depression and, uh, I came out, I stayed out a couple of years. My mother went to Charleston and I went, she worked in Charleston for a while. She had to work wherever, you know, she could get work. And uh, I think I went to a little school in Charleston one year called Washington Grade School. I lived with, uh, my grandmother, my father's mother. . .

AB: Now this was before you. . .

OC: . . .cause my mother stayed where she worked. That was, that was, well, I'm sort of

doubling back. That was (AB: Mmm-hmm) when I was much younger.

AB: Mmm-hmm. So the period that you were in Charleston was somewhere in your grade school years. . .

OC: Right, right.

AB: . . . and then you went back up to Montgomery after that. But then when you came to West Virginia State College, you went 1 year at West Virginia State College and dropped out?

OC: Dropped out. I stayed out a year, maybe a little more than a year.

AB: What did you do while you were out?

OC: Oh, I, I babysat. I stayed at home. That was about all. I didn't do anything much.

AB: You stayed out because the family could not afford to send you?

OC: Couldn't afford to send me and then uh my father -- Oh, and incidentally, my mother and father were divorced when I was around 5 or 6 years old. Sometimes I forget, I don't give you all the details. But anyway, my step-father was a World War II veteran. Not II, World War I (AB: I, veteran.) veteran. And, uh, the government issued something like baby bonds and he received a nice bonus, as did all the other veterans. And uh, at that time, I sort of became interested in becoming a beautician. And he said, "Well, you, you can go back to school or you can go to a cosmetology school." So I chose going back to school and then I finished. I graduated in '41 (AB: Mmm-hmm) from West Virginia State.

AB: What was your step-father's name?

OC: James Cosby.

AB: C-o-s-b-y.

OC: Right.

AB: And he was from Charleston?

OC: No, no, no, he was from Montgomery.

AB: He was from Montgomery. And uh your parents were divorced about, when you were about 5?

OC: About 5.

AB: Did your mother marry, remarry immediately or was there a time?

OC: No, not, not immediately. No, hmm-mmm, several years passed.

RW-N: Did you continue to see your father?

OC: Oh, yes, I saw, in fact, I was with my father at the time of his death. We were, we were never separated from him permanently. Uh, uh, she always told us, "This is your father." He would come to visit us, and we'd go see him, stay in the summer or something like that.

RW-N: Did you live far away?

OC: He lived in Beckley, Beckley until in his later years he moved to South Carolina where he met and married and, uh, that wife passed. And when he became very ill, his, his friends called me. I was living here then and I, I stayed with him about 2 months while he was ill.

RW-N: In South Carolina?

OC: In South Carolina?

RW-N: Taking care of him.

OC: Mmm-hmm, so, uh . . .

AB: There were no other children on either side, I mean your mother did not have other children after she remarried?

OC: No, no, no.

AB: And neither did your father?

OC: No, no.

AB: So you remain . . .

OC: We're the only 2.

AB: . . . you and your brother, the only 2 children. And as you described that relationship then it seems to have been an amiable relationship between your mother and father even though (OC: It was, even . . .) there was the divorce.

OC: Even with, with my father's mother, my grandmother. She sort of took up for my mother, you know, she said, "Oh, you shouldn't treat this girl like this." You know, you, perhaps it might be difficult to understand, but she was always on my father's mother's side, (AB: Mmm-hmm) on my father . . . on my mother's side.

AB: On your mother's side.

OC: Right, right. She was always. . .

AB: His mother, your grandmother was always on your mother's side.

OC: Right, right. Mmm-hmm.

RW-N: But they nevertheless said, "This is your father."

OC: Right, my mother never let us forget it, no, she never. . .

AB: And never tried to stop you from visiting him or anything like that.

OC: No, no, no, no.

AB: But you, (RW-N: Your mother, I'm sorry.) but you lived with your mother?

OC: Lived with my mother.

AB: And visited . . .

RW-N: Did your mother support you?

OC: Yes, yes, she supported me until the time when she married my step-father, of course, the 2 of them ...

RW-N: Now how old were you then?

OC: When they married? I don't know.

RW-N: You were still a child?

OC: I was young.

RW-N: Yes, you had to be a child.

AB: Did your father provide any financial support at all for you?

OC: Very little, very little.

AB: Mmm-hmm, and, but your step-father accepted you as his own daughter practically?

OC: Oh, he did, he was, he just, I can recall once in college, uh, going on a choir trip. I sang with the a capella choir and uh, my mother said, "Well, you, we don't have the money." And he said, "Is it worthwhile? Are you getting anything out of it?" You know, I said, "Well, I'd like to go." And he said, "Well, come on I'll take you to the store and you get what you want and get ready to go." (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) He was that kind of a step-father. (AB: Mmm-hmm) So he, uh, was very nice to us.

AB: How do you, as you think back on the years that you were at Simmons and at London, how do you think about those years? Was that a good time for you or, or what?

OC: It was because I didn't know of any other time, you know. It was good, good for me. I enjoyed those days.

AB: Did you participate in activities?

OC: Everything, everything I could get into. My, my mother said I was in too much, you know. Cheerleading, of course at that time there was no band, but uh, what was it, YWCA? Whatever, junior choir, glee club, anything that was going on, I felt I had to be involved in it.

AB: Uh that, when you were up at Washington, you had to be bussed into the school.

OC: Right, right. [refers to Washington school, in London, WV]

AB: How did you participate in activities there, uh, when you had to ride a bus?

OC: Well, my brother, see, was in school, too. And we would have to walk. Sometimes they would announce, "Well, uh, Falls District bus will run, will pick up students at the Montgomery Bridge." So my brother and I, along with the other students, would walk to Montgomery Bridge and, you know, the bus would pick us up there. But there weren't, there weren't too many night activities, not too many.

AB: Did you, at home, uh, was yours a close family or, what was your home life like?

OC: Very good, very good. It was a close family, very close. Not -- there, there weren't too many activities like outside of the home for, for families to engage in. My mother and father were avid card players. They liked to play Whist, and you know, they'd go from house to house playing Whist and drag us along with them. But that was about, you know, and an occasional dance or something like that, but not. . . We were very close, closely knit.

RW-N: Now you were living in Cannelton for most of those years?

OC: No, no.

RW-N: I'm a little bit confused.

OC: I'm sorry.

RW-N: No, my fault.

OC: I was born in Cannelton.

RW-N: You were born in Cannelton.

OC: But we didn't stay in Cannelton too long. My mother's mother lived in Cannelton, but uh, as we grew up, we moved to Montgomery, about 3 miles from Cannelton.

RW-N: Right, yes. And then you also lived in Union?

OC: That's just a little suburb of Montgomery.

RW-N: So you consider that really Montgomery, right?

OC: Right.

RW-N: And then you were in Charleston only for a year?

OC: Just, just a year.

RW-N: So basically you're talking about being raised in Montgomery.

OC: I was in Montgomery, most, most of my life.

RW-N: And for most of your major childhood years, you had a step-father?

OC: Yes.

RW-N: Yes, so when you talk about mom and dad being card . . .

OC: In fact, he died when I was in college, my step-father did, while I was in college.

AB: Mmm-hmm, so what was the social life like in, in, for you all as you grew up?

OC: Not much, not much, just an occasional party, social, Saturday night, that, that was . . . I remember as kids we used to set the clock back and go to parties on Saturday night because we had to be in Sunday school on Sunday. But other than that we didn't . . .

AB: Where were the parties held?

OC: House, at various people's homes. Maybe at my house this time or, or Morris Creek the

next time, you know, just different homes.

RW-N: And Morris Creek is right behind Montgomery.

OC: Right, right, they call it Morris Drive (R.W-N: Yes) now.

RW-N: Did you, uh, were there many social things going on in the church? And was that a part of your life in any way?

OC: The church was a major part of my life, but uh, not too many things were going on. – Not, not ...

RW-N: What church was that?

OC: That was Baptist Church, First Baptist Church in Montgomery.

RW-N: And did you attend church regularly?

OC: Yes, I did.

RW-N: On Sundays?

OC: On Sundays.

RW-N: And other days as well?

OC: All the time, well not, not during the week.

RW-N: Sundays, basically Sundays.

OC: Sundays, basically Sundays.

AB: Did you have chores that you had to do at home?

OC: Oh, yes.

AB: What?

OC: Dishes, dishes and uh, uh when we were living in Union, we didn't have running water. You had to bring in the water or, and, and if you went to my grandmother's I had to bring in the wash

water on Sunday nights so she could do the laundry on Monday. So we had chores.

AB: Did your brother have chores too?

OC: Yes, but he read all the time. He was an avid reader and uh, we always had to pull him away from a book to get him to do his chores. But we, we had our chores.

RW-N: What was Montgomery like in those days? I mean there was a time when Montgomery was a very busy, active town with a lot of people coming in. Was that at that time or had it quieted down?

OC: I think. I, I don't think it was so active or so lively because, uh, for the most part -- I lived on what they called Fayette Pike. You know where that is. And we used to sit on the porch and just look, look down the hill, downtown and not see too much activity, just a few people sitting or . . .

RW-N: Was the bridge up then?

OC: Yes, the bridge was already in. We haven't. . . In fact, when I grew up, we had to pay a toll, pay 5 cents because, uh, we, we walked from Cannelton to Montgomery, Montgomery to Cannelton because my grandmother lived there. And we would walk to see her and pay that nickel. Or if we, we could . . .

RW-N: To walk over the bridge?

OC: Yes, you had to pay to walk over the bridge. And if -- when you rode the school bus, you bought a ticket that would last you the week or a month or whatever amount of time.

AB: What about discipline when you were growing up? Who was the disciplinarian in your family?

OC: My mother.

AB: Did she spank?

OC: Yes, yes, she did. She really did. [chuckles] Uh, my father, my step-father -- I don't know, perhaps it was because he was my step-father -- he never, he never spanked us or anything. In fact, he'd get after her. He'd say, "Don't, don't hit those kids. You'll make them crazy."

[chuckles] And you know, we always liked for him to take up for us, but he was never one to be mean or, you know, rude or anything like that.

RW-N: Now what kind of work did he do?

OC: He was a coal miner; in fact, he was killed in the mines.

AB: Uh, what was Christmas like at your house?

OC: It was good. But not, -- nothing as lavish as, as it is now for kids, you know, that the 1st thing they look for gifts, uh, you know, bicycles and everything. Well, if we got fruit, candy, or a new pair of shoes or something like that as a kid, uh, you know, a warm coat or whatever, maybe a doll.

AB: Did you have a tree?

OC: Yes, we had a tree, but my mother was just so meticulously clean, the tree came down the very next day, you know. She just was busy sweeping up the, you know, and cause the tree was a live tree and she just didn't like dirt around. I, she has even visited me since I was in Logan and she said, "What kind of a housekeeper are you?" [laughter] [inaudible] . . . that type of person, but. . .

RW-N: Did you believe in Santa Claus?

OC: I did until I was 7th grade. [laughter] I, I, I, I'll never forget that day. Uh, they sent me, uh -- I was with my grandmother, my mother's mother, and, and they sent me from her house to my

aunt's house, my mother's sister. And uh, I guess maybe they suspected that I was growing up, you know, and, but I, I, I honestly believed there was Santa Claus. So my brother was with me and I stumbled over a child's kiddie cart. I remember my aunt's bathrobe was thrown over it. I said, "Oh, there's no, no Santa Claus." Because those things were out for my little cousin, my aunt's children. And my brother said, "Oh, Ottrus the war is over." But some, *you know*, didn't, you know -- that the World War is over or, you know, something that everybody knows. "You ought to know there's no Santa Claus." [laughter] I was disillusioned then, but uh, I was 7th grade now. I'm not kidding you. I was actually 7th grade because you see you didn't have the TV or radios or anything like that to, you know, to tell you that there really wasn't a Santa Claus. And my brother was just, just so disgusted, he said, "Look like everybody ought to know that." (AB: Chuckles) But uh, I -- that's how I found out. (AB: Chuckles.)

RW-N: What was your relationship with your brother? Was that. . . ?

OC: It was very good. We were, we were -- he was very protective of me. He was 3 years older than I was and, and he was very protective, except when he began sort of getting interested in girls. He didn't like me dragging along. She'd, my mother would say, "Well, you can't go unless you take Ottrus." "Oh, do I have to take her?" [AB: Chuckles] "Well, come on." You know, it was that, that type of thing, but he wouldn't allow anybody to hurt me if he could help it.

RW-N: Mrs. Chatman, you have a 1st name that's a little bit unusual. Can you tell us about that?

OC: I don't know where that name came from. You know, I was asked, I was in North Carolina last month and uh some young man wanted to know how I came by that name. Now, my father named me and, and the story is that he used to date a young lady whose name was Ottrus. That's all I know, and, and when I was born they they named me Ottrus. I don't know, now someone

says it's Russian, it's this, it's that, but all I know is Ottrus. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm)

AB: Was there, uh, did you all ever hear any stories about slavery from either of your parents?

OC: Very little, very little. I, I . . .

AB: Mrs. Chatman is showing us a book that's titled *The Burke-Wheeler Family Reunion, August 5-8, 1999, Last Summer of the Century, Washington*. Did this family reunion take place in Washington, D.C.?

OC: In Washington, D.C. this summer, this, this, this past, past summer and, and there, there are pictures of my great-grandmother, my father, and uh, other relatives, of course. There that, that was a, a lot of revealing things, you know, that I did not know and uh,

AB: So some . . .

RW-N: Mrs. Chatman is talking about a booklet here that she is showing us from the Burke-Wheeler Family Reunion, August 5th through 8th, 1999, uh, in Washington, D.C. and has just commented that she's found out a lot about the family too that she hadn't known previously. Beautiful booklet.

AB: It does look. . . Could, could you get a copy made of that for us or could we. . . ?

OC: I've thought, I've thought of doing this because I have a nephew and I would just love for him to see this book and to, to look at the pictures of, of relatives whom he, he has not known or anything and, and the only rel -- only direct relative is his grandfather and my father whose pictures are in that book. (AB: Mmm-hmm) And I would just love to have -- in fact, I can, I can have each page duplicated.

AB: Yeah. If you could make a copy for us, we'd love to have it. Or if you would trust us with it, we could take it and copy it down at Marshall and bring it back to you.

OC: Oh, you're perfectly welcome to, (AB: We could do that.) you're welcome.

AB: We could make 2 copies. Uh, we probably can't do the color, but we can (OC: That's alright -- inaudible.)we can just do the plain copies. Yes, we can do that.

RW-N: Mrs. Chatman, I'm curious, when I look at this book that there's a letter in it from Bill Clinton, the White House, July 14th. Can you tell us how that came about? Did he know about family reunions in general?

OC: I think the chairman, the chairman of this, uh, reunion is the person who is responsible for, for securing this letter from Bill Clinton because she lives in Maryland, right, right out of Washington, D.C. (RW-N: And. . .) Regina Robinson, who, who chaired and did all of the groundwork and legwork for, for the success of this reunion. It, it was a beautiful affair and uh I almost didn't attend. [chuckles]

AB: Is that right?

OC: My minister in Logan here is my cousin and he insisted on my going to this reunion; in fact, I went with him and his family. We flew from Charleston.

RW-N: So you're very happy that you went?

OC: I am, I am because they treated me like royalty. I was the oldest relative in attendance and that meant a lot to them. So ...

AB: Were there many people there?

OC: Yes, quite a number, quite a number. I, I, I have lots of pictures. I think around 75 or 80 [inaudible].

AB: Oh, that's wonderful.

OC: This is, this is one I want you to see.

RW-N: You've got beautiful pictures.

AB: We're looking at a picture of, uh, Lucy Henderson Hodges in the book that Mrs., uh, Chatman has shown us.

OC: She was a very outstanding lady in Montgomery in Baptist circles and in commerce she was the, owned, uh, ^{three} ~~1~~-fourths of Fayette Pike at one time and in her later years. Now this is my great-aunt, my father's aunt, my grandmother's sister, Ruth ~~uh~~, Lucy. Uh, now her, her daughter's picture should be, be there somewhere.

RW-N: And we will be including a copy of this really lovely book with this tape. We probably will not be able to capture the color that is in this book, uh, but all the information will be with the tape.

AB: Was this the 1st reunion that the family had had?

OC: No, no, they've had several in Charleston and uh other places, but I've only attended 2. I am ashamed of myself, but uh, during David's lifetime, we went to Charleston and uh, there is a little church in Vandalia, uh, that most of them attended when they were children so uh, we went twice to the church services that Sunday. (AB: Mmm-hmm) But uh, this, this is the only reunion that I have ever attended everything. I went there and attended everything. Now in Charleston, I went down for the banquet and uh, that was all.

AB: How long, how many days was this reunion?

OC: It starts on Friday, Thursday and Friday and lasts through Sunday. People begin to leave on Sunday.

AB: Mmm-hmm. That's wonderful.

OC: It was, it was a lov -- lovely experience. I, I wanted to find a picture of my great-

grandmother in here somewhere.

RW-N: [Inaudible] I thought there was another one here, but it must be over. Oh, here it is.

OC: Yes, it is. This is my great-grandmother who was 104 or 2 or something like that when she passed in Montgomery.

AB: We're looking at a picture in Mrs. Chatman's book of Ruth Rollins Henderson and the title is *The Beginning* and she lived to be 104 years old. That's wonderful.

OC: And that Hodge is her daughter, was her daughter. She, her daughter cared for her until her death. See, they didn't have nursing homes or things like that in those, those days. I think I must have been around 10th or 11th grade or something like that when she died.

AB: So you remember her?

OC: Oh, yes, I remember her. It says 19. . .

AB: 1932 or something like that.

OC: '32, well I graduated in '33.

RW-N: [Inaudible] From high school, right?

OC: Mmm-hmm, yes. So I remember her. She was blind, (AB: Mmm hmm) but she knew us.

AB: That's great. That's wonderful.

OC: In fact, her, her children were that old, they hired a new, what was happening, you know, they were just sort of out of it. [chuckles]

AB: Mmm-hmm. Well, when you were going to, you went to school and went to West Virginia State College, what made you decide to go to college?

OC: I think it was the urging of my mother. She al -- I'm, I'm the 1st in my family on my mother's side to go as far as I did in school. And I, I think, uh, with her urging and pushing me;

in fact, she's the reason I got my master's. She, uh, after I graduated from college, she just said, "Well, you gotta keep on. You've got to do this and that." So I think it was at her insistence.

AB: Why do you think she pushed?

OC: And I did have a little scholarship. (AB: Mmm-hmm) 60 dollars to be exact. Wasn't that a big one? [chuckles]

RW-N: Well, it was probably okay in those days when tuition was. . .

OC: Right, right, right.

RW-N: It probably helped a lot.

OC: It did, it did.

AB: Why do you think your mother pushed?

OC: Maybe it was because of her lack of education. It could have been. I, I, I really don't know.

RW-N: What did she say to you to, do you remember?

OC: No, I don't remember exact words or anything like that, but she always wanted me to go to school.

AB: And you said that you graduated with honors. You were salutatorian (OC: Salutatorian.) from Washington (OC: Simmons), from Simmons, from Simmons. (OC: Mmm-hmm) And so studying then was an important part of your (OC: It was.) experience there.

OC: And I had to study, my, my brother was the type that I told you he liked to read a lot. He just had a lot of common knowledge. He, he, he didn't have to dig and study and do as I did. And, and of course, they, they say I, I pretended to be studying to keep from doing my chores, but uh, I did have to study to get what I, you know, what I did.

RW-N: But your brother who loved to read did not go to college. Is that right? (OC: No.) You

said you were the 1st one.

OC: In fact, he didn't finish high school. They -- he quit in the senior class, in the senior year and, and, but he did that well in the Army, they gave him his diploma and they put his picture on the cover of their yearbook. So he, he, he was a smart guy, but he just, you know, quit school. Things weren't too good as far as maybe money or so forth, so ...

RW-N: You must have liked school though, huh?

OC: I did, I did, I really did.

RW-N: But you also said that you had thought that you might become a beautician. Was ... ?

OC: I did, well, that, that was during the years that I wasn't in school. I wasn't in college there for a year, year and a half.

RW-N: And that was primarily (OC: And...) because of the finance ...

OC: Right, right.

RW-N: Financial situation.

OC: And my mother's friend was a beautician and she'd say, "Well, come on up here and let me teach you how to do a shampoo. Let me teach you how to do a manicure."

RW-N: And did she have a shop in Montgomery?

OC: Did I have? No.

RW-N: Your, your mother's friend.

OC: Yes, she had a shop in Montgomery. So I would, you know, hang around them and, and that's was the reason I was interested in it, not really that interested.

RW-N: You really wanted to go back (OC: Wanted to get back in school.) when your step-father asked you what you wanted.

OC: Right, right, mmm-hmm.

AB: When you were at West Virginia State College, did you participate in many activities there?

OC: I did. Well, mainly, mainly the a capella choir. I sang with them throughout, throughout college and we traveled a lot, things like that. And uh, the uh -- my major was health and physical education and so I was with the stunt team and, and things like that. And then we had a little dance team, a team in natural dancing; they called it interpretive dancing. And uh, book lover's club, but just, just about anything I could get into, I . . .

RW-N: Where did you travel with the a capella choir?

OC: We went to Pittsburgh, went to . . .

RW-N: To other high, to other colleges?

OC: To other colleges, well, I tell you how we, we traveled. If there were people in certain areas who were alumni members, they would sort of organize and invite us to come. We were in Dayton, Toledo, Pittsburgh, Chicago. That was our biggest thrill, to go to Chicago.

RW-N: And you would, you would go to the other high schools and colleges?

OC: Well, maybe high school, (WR-N: Or colleges) colleges, or it could be an alumni club for, or a sorority or fraternity, or . . .

RW-N: And you'd go on the buses?

OC: Oh, yes, we'd travel by that.

RW-N: And stay where?

OC: We'd stay with private homes. In Chicago, we stayed at the Mattie, not Mattie, the Madam C. J. Walker -- Poro, there's a Poro College. This was a lady who did a lot for black people's hair. If you, if, if I, I stand corrected, (AB: Right,) but that's where we stayed in her dorm --

dormitory (AB: Mmm hmm.) in Chicago and that was many years ago. But we stayed with, you know, different friends (AB: Mmm hmm.) and people, a lot of, a lot of the kids had relatives in, in many of those cities.

RW-N: So it always got arranged one way or the other.

OC: Oh, yes, it was arranged.

RW-N: Did you also travel with the stunt club?

OC: We didn't travel.

RW-N: You didn't.

OC: We, we'd go to Dunbar or up to Charleston or something like that. We didn't, we didn't. . . The only travel. (RW-N: So most of your travels..) was with the glee club, with the a capella choir.

AB: During those days, were they pretty strict on girls at West Virginia State College?

OC: Oh, yes, oh, yes, they were. Girls weren't allowed to smoke. Uh, girls had to be in at a certain hour. Girls, freshman girls could not go to town unless there were 4 or 5 and a chaperone who would have to be an upperclassman. So there were, there were very strict rules when uh I 1st went to college.

AB: Had your mother been very strict on you when you were at home?

OC: Not very strict, but she was careful with me. You know, if I, if I were invited to a party, now she may let me go, she may let my brother take me, but before that party was over, I'd see my mother and 2 or 3 of her friends [chuckles] kind of come in the back door so to see if that party was as it should be. She, she wasn't strict in every sense of the word, but, but she was careful. She was careful. She, she worked a lot, but she was always interested in my safety or

someone looking out for me.

AB: Did you date when you were in high school?

OC: [chuckles] Yes, I did a little dating. [laughter] I did.

AB: Did your mother allow that or did you have to do it when she wasn't watching?

OC: She, she allowed it, but it had to be in groups, you know. We, we couldn't, the 2 of us just couldn't go off alone. We'd have to go with, in the groups. I think that was true with most of the parents then. (AB: Mmm hmm.)

RW-N: There are times when tape recorders don't show everything and if this tape recorder could have shown everything, it would have shown a gleam in your eye. [laughter]

OC: Oh, really. But I, I didn't, I don't think I did much dating in high school. It, it wasn't permitted. We, we, (RW-N: That's probably the way. . .) you know, we liked the boys.

RW-N: That's probably why there was a gleam in your eye. [laughter]

OC: We liked the boys alright. I'm not saying we didn't like them or didn't want to go out with them, but, but we couldn't all the time.

RW-N: Now did you go to proms? Were there proms in your school?

OC: Yes, I, I went to proms. I went to school dances and we always had a social after a basketball game, a football game, things like that, and Sadie Hawkins Day and things, but, uh . .

RW-N: And other teams came to your school to play?

OC: Yes, other teams came.

RW-N: And these were all among the black schools?

OC: Right, right, all among the black schools.

AB: When you were at State, did you, uh, join a sorority?

OC: No, but I wasn't, I was inducted into the Pyramid club. (AB: Mmm-hmm) I joined a sorority after I graduated.

AB: The Deltas.

OC: That was the Deltas.

RW-N: Can you tell us what the Pyramid Club is?

OC: That is, uh, saying you want to be a Delta, in so many words. There are, there are sororities and fraternities on campus and uh, I ^{had} joined the Pyramid Club, but I graduated before I went into the sorority. So after I graduated, I, I joined the graduate chapter.

RW-N: Did you stay active in the sorority?

OC: I've been active for 50 years. I haven't missed a month. Now, I haven't attended every meeting, but I've been an active member; in fact, I hosted the, the sorority last May.

AB: Mrs. Chatman is referring to Delta Sigma Theta sorority (OC: Right.) of which she is a member. So were your years then at State College good years for you?

OC: They were. They were good years and uh, until my husband's death recently I, we went back every year for homecoming, every year we took part in, in the homecoming activities, but I haven't been back since his death.

AB: When you graduated from West Virginia State College, what did you do?

OC: I substituted as a substitute teacher. I taught, uh, at Simmons for, oh, a long time. That was, you know, around 4, in '41 and uh, I think it was in '42, '43 they began calling men to the Army. And uh, I got regular teaching job. I taught, uh, from '42 to '43 in a young man's place. He had been inducted into the Army. And then uh the next year I taught '43 to '44, that was 2 years I taught regularly. Then '44 I taught 3 months, September, October, November and Dr.

Ferrell, I don't know if you remember him, Dr. Ferrell called me and said, uh, that they needed a teacher in Logan County. Would I be interested in permanent teaching because what I was doing in, in Montgomery, I was teaching in these soldiers' places and if they were to come back, I would be out of a job. So I told him, "Yes, I wanted a regular job." And he said, "Well, you can go there for 6 months if you like," because they had a teacher who came to Logan from Washington, but she didn't like the place. I could see why, coming from Washington. And so here I am.

RW-N: Could I back up for a moment?

OC: Yes.

RW-N: When you 1st got out of college, you were unable to get a permanent job because there just weren't enough jobs available.

OC: There weren't enough jobs available.

RW-N: For black teachers?

OC: For black teachers.

RW-N: Or for teachers in general?

OC: Well, I don't know about, about teachers in general, but, but I tried and tried to get work, well, of course maybe I didn't try in other places, but I tried to get work at home (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) and there just weren't any openings. (RW-N: Right.) In fact, I went to the, to the president of the board of education and he said, "Well, unless somebody dies or quits or resigns or retires, we don't have anything right now."

RW-N: Now would you explain who Dr. Ferrell is or was at the time?

OC: Dr. Ferrell was uh dean of, at West Virginia State College. He was an instructor, a violinist,

a great man. [chuckles] I mean, he was just, uh, I think he was next to, maybe he was 2nd to the president. I, I'm really not sure now. My memory sort of fails me. But he was, he was certainly a great person and with a memory that you, you just can't imagine. You could, I could walk in there now, if he were alive, and he would say, "Well, here's Ottrus." Don't you think, uh . . . ?

AB: Absolutely, absolutely.

OC: He was like that.

AB: Years later (OC: Years later.)he remembered you. (OC: He remembered.) You had changed, uh . . .

OC: He would. . .

AB: He knew who. . .

END OF TAPE 1 - SIDE 1

BEGINNING OF TAPE 1 - SIDE 2

AB: . . . about, uh, Dr. Harrison Ferrell.

OC: Yes, Harrison H. Ferrell. He was, he was really a great human being. I thought he was absolutely wonderful. He, he spoke at our commencement from high school and yet he remembered me when I went there from college. Uh, my last name was Burke, this is interesting - and a 1st name Ottrus. When I went to college, boys sat on one side in the, uh, auditorium, girls on another, on the other side. So being Ottrus, they put me on the boys' side. I was the only girl sitting in this huge auditorium where the boys sat. And uh, Mrs. Maybelle Arrington, I think that's her name, sent me to the dean's office and I said, "Dr. Ferrell, I'm a girl, I'm not, not a boy." And he says, "Ottrus, I know it." [laughter] And so as a result, I didn't have a seat. I didn't have to go to assembly.

AB: [laughter] You didn't have to go to chapel?

OC: I didn't have to go to chapel and during those days, you went every morning at 10 o'clock except on Wednesday, you went Wednesday night. So then I made money. Kids would pay me to sit in their seat. [laughter] Maybelle would sit in the back with a chart, and of course, if she saw a head in that seat, it didn't matter to her who it was. She just checked their name off. So, that was one way of getting through school.

AB: So it was Dr. Ferrell who called and told you that there was a vacancy in Logan County?

OC: Right, right, he was, he was. And I, I, I came here to stay, actually 6 months and, and my friends in Montgomery said, "You're going to Logan? That's a terrible place. You, ooh, you don't know what happens over there. You know, they shoot up and they do this, that, and the other." And I said, "Well, it's a living." But I've never been happier. I really, you know, wherever you make your living and you make friends, and the thing about that there was so many kids here with whom I had gone to school, men and women I knew at West Virginia State. So it, it wasn't any different than Montgomery, not a, not a bit different.

RW-N: Now you taught where when you came, when you 1st came to Logan?

OC: Aracoma High School. It was an all-black high school.

RW-N: And you taught. . . ?

OC: I taught health, phys. ed., and science. That, the, the teacher who, who was substituting while they were trying to find someone didn't have science on her certificate. So she, they had to have a science teacher and I had enough hours, I was, I said, "Maybe they want me to blow up the building. I don't know." [chuckles] Cause I had never taught science. I just had it on my certificate I had to take a lot of chemistry in, uh, phys ed.

RW-N: What kind of science did you teach? Was it general science?

OC: Just general science, just general science.

RW-N: And was that, what grade level was that?

OC: Just that year, that was junior high.

RW-N: In junior high.

OC: See, it was a combined junior and senior high school. But I taught, uh, I think I taught something like 8th grade or 9th grade science when I 1st came, but then at the end of that year, this man came back from the Army. The science teacher came back and he resumed his position. I didn't have to teach science any longer, but I did teach phys ed and health and then they moved me over into social studies, uh world history and American history.

RW-N: In the same school?

OC: In the same school.

AB: Still at Aracoma?

OC: Still at Ara. . . , I taught there 17 years until they closed it.

RW-N: But, do I understand you correctly that your degree was in phys ed and health?

OC: Phys ed and health, but I also had enough hours on my certificate to teach science because I had 9 hours chemistry plus biology. I think 4 hours. You had to take Mr. Hamlin's biology and I had, uh, another course, so I had the required hours.

RW-N: So you had a bachelor of science degree and then you had . . . ?

OC: I had these other . . .

RW-N: Plenty of science classes.

OC: And I also had enough social studies, like English. I, I taught a little English and . . . I guess

maybe a little bit of everything. When I retired I was librarian.

RW-N: Mmm-hmm.

AB: When you, when did you begin your graduate work?

OC: And, let's see, in '42, either it was '42, right, right after I came out of college.

AB: And where did you begin it?

OC: Ohio State University.

AB: And did you complete your master's there?

OC: I did.

AB: In education?

OC: In education.

RW-N: Did you go there in the summers?

OC: Summers.

RW-N: Mmm-hmm.

OC: I didn't go during winters, you know, during school days, but -- school time, but I went every summer until I got my master's.

RW-N: And your master's is in what?

OC: Health, physical education, and recreation [inaudible].

AB: Mmm hmm. And how many summers were you there?

OC: I was there about 3 summers.

RW-N: And that completed your graduate work, right, your master's degree?

OC: It did, it completed my master's degree, but now, I, I went to school further since I got my master's I went to Marshall for a little while. (AB: Mmm-hmm) I did, uh, they wanted me to

teach West Virginia History and I didn't have it on my certificate so I, I went one summer, took West Virginia History. And I took, uh, something, Western Civilization along with another little course, in economics. Well, at that time uh, uh, David and I were sort of dating and he went to take math, and I, I said, "Well, if you're going, I'll go." So we drove down every morning to school.

AB: You mentioned that you replaced some people who were in the service, uh, when you began your teaching. (OC: Right) Uh, what do you remember about World War II and that whole period?

OC: Not too much. Uh, well, mainly because I didn't feel affected by it like some people did. Uh, the only thing, uh, I knew you, you -- things were rationed. I remember that -- sugar, uh, butter wasn't it? And -- my mother used to keep me on the porch with the shopping bag and if she heard -- somebody would call, "Well, they've got butter at A & P." "Ottrus, go get butter." Or shoes or whatever was rationed she had to have it. But uh, -- not -- I, I, I, it didn't affect me too much.

AB: Did you know, uh, personally many people who were in the service, classmates or friends or so?

OC: Not too many, not, not too many.

AB: Did you know anybody who was lost, uh, who was killed during World War II?

OC: No, no, I didn't.

RW-N: And of course, that means that your brother did not go into service?

OC: My brother was in, was already in service. He went in service and (RW-N: Yes, yes, I'm sorry, yes.) in fact, he went to Japan twice. (AB: Mmm-hmm) But he -- and, and when he retired

from West Virginia State College as a something in the Army, uh quarter-master corps or whatever. I don't. . .

AB: So he made, he stayed and made a career of it.

OC: He made a career of it.

RW-N: I do recall that you said that now. But you didn't feel that he was in danger or. . . ?

OC: He was never in any active arena.

AB: Uh-huh. Then let's come back to, uh, your time at Aracoma. How do you feel about that period in your life when you were teaching at Aracoma?

OC: It was a great period. I, I really enjoyed it. I, I had the cooperation of parents, uh, see, I was talking to someone about that this morning. Uh, if you told a parent something about a child or you were disturbed that a child wasn't doing what he or she shouldn't be doing, that parent would help you, would say, "Well, now, listen, you do this. If she doesn't do this, you let me know and I'll take charge." They had that cooperative attitude toward a teacher. And, and now I don't think it's so prevalent. It may be but, but I have my doubts.

AB: You were still single during that period of your life? You had not married then?

OC: I had married. Now let me go back. I married in '49 a doctor, here in Logan, and we, he lived, and we lived together 9 years when he died. And 4 years later I was married again. So, yes, I was married.

AB: What was, what was your 1st husband's name?

OC: Elliot.

AB: Dr. Elliot.

OC: Elliot, H.T. Elliot.

AB: And was he a physician?

OC: He was a medical doctor. He died at, uh, he uh, was superintendent at Denmar State Hospital at the time of his death. (AB: Mmm-hmm) That's where he died.

AB: And do you have children?

OC: No, no children.

AB: Mmm-hmm. And then 4 years later you. . .

OC: 4 years later my, my kids caused me to marry again. [chuckles] They used to come in and go in David's room, he was teaching at the same school. And they'd go, "Well, Mr. Chatman, Ms., Ms. Elliot's over there crying." And you know, it was fall and the fall is always, uh, sort of dreary, a sad time. And he would come over and we'd talk, come over and we'd talk. And we did, we talked for 4 years. And after that, we married. [chuckles] And as I said, I'm, I was much older than he was, but we were together 35 years. So I don't think age . . .

RW-N: When you say "much older" what do you mean by that?

OC: He, uh, he died, he was 66 years old and I was 14 years his senior.

RW-N: 14 years. And you were married 35 years?

OC: Yes, mmm-hmm.

RW-N: And it worked well?

OC: It did, it really did. And we traveled together and we were friends, buddies, enjoyed each other.

AB: Now you uh, uh, he, he -- was it his family that had the funeral home?

OC: His family, his family. It was his grandmother that had the funeral home.

RW-N: Here in Logan.

OC: Here in Logan.

RW-N: In fact we're sitting in your home (OC: Right) which is part of that building. (OC: Right)

Is that right?

OC: The funeral home is downstairs.

RW-N: Mmm-hmm.

AB: And did he then operate the funeral home?

OC: Yes, he did. At his mother's death. . . , at his grandmother's death, she, she, she gave the funeral home to him and uh, included her daughters and son in monetary ways. (AB: Mmm-hmm)
But she gave him the funeral home.

RW-N: Would you tell us his name?

OC: David, David L. Chatman.

RW-N: And he was a Logan boy, hmm?

OC: He was born in Logan, Sharples, a little town about 18 miles, not town, a little village about 18 miles from here.

RW-N: And where had he gone to college?

OC: West Virginia State and Marshall.

RW-N: He came back here and was a teacher here too?

OC: Right.

AB: And do you continue to operate the funeral home?

OC: I do. I, I operate it with the help of a licensed mortician and funeral director. I, I'm not allowed to do that because I'm not a funeral director.

AB: Are you at all involved in anything that goes on? I mean, do you drive, uh, in funerals or

anything like that?

OC: I have, I have done it, but, but since his death . . . [phone rings, tape stopped]

RW-N: I think so and I'd like to get the date there. Are we ready?

OC: There might be some more information on the back.

RW-N: We'll copy this too if you would let us.

OC: Well, you can have that. I've got a little girl works for the board of education to do that –

(RW-N: We'll put that . . .) did goo gobs of those things for friends.

RW-N: We're, we're on tape, right?

AB: Yes.

RW-N: Mmm hmm. While we were off tape for a few minutes Mrs. Chatman was telling us a little bit more about her husband, David Lee Chatman and we will take some material describing him and put it with her tape. Uh, he died in 1996 and Mrs. Chatman was telling us that when she 1st came to Logan he, to teach in high school, he was actually a student at Logan. Um, she also was telling us that he became ill rather abruptly, um, and that he died within 3 days. Um, how was that for you, that time?

OC: It was hard. It was very hard. I couldn't even talk about it for a while. It, it was very . . .

RW-N: It was absolutely unexpected.

OC: His death was. I, I, I think he was more ill than he acknowledged, which is typical of men, you know. Uh, I remember we had, we had just come from the Bahamas and uh, he had an appointment for a checkup. And when he came back I said, "You've been to the doctor and back?" And he said, "I didn't get to see him." I said, "Well, why didn't you stay and wait for him?" He said, "Well, I'll go back tomorrow." But, but he was, he was very ill that night. That

was on a Tuesday. We came back on Monday. He went to the doctor on Tuesday. He didn't get to see the doctor. Wednesday he went and uh, the nurse called me and she said, "Mr. Chatman's a little disoriented. Uh, maybe we'd better keep him and see what's wrong." And he, uh, I went over there, stayed until around 9 or 10 o'clock and uh, he had, uh, kidney failure, plus the diabetes, and you know, that's -- the 2 go hand in hand, so he went into a coma the next day. So I never, never saw him or, you know, talked with him anymore.

AB: Mmm-hmm.

RW-N: Now you were, according to your description, you traveled and you were good companions.

OC: We were, we were.

RW-N: How have you managed your life since that time which has not been that long ago?

OC: It hasn't been easy, but uh, I do have the support of friends. Some who call me every day to, to find out if I'm alright. I have a loving church family that just sort of surrounds me and uh, takes -- you know, if they think I'm, I'm busy -- if I'm having a funeral, someone comes in and says, "Well, here's breakfast" or, or "Come on, I'm gonna take you to Long John Silver's" or whatever. So people are, are kind although it's, it's still that void. There's still that void that, that I -- used to be every evening I'd come upstairs, when I'd close up downstairs, I could hardly make it upstairs. It was just, you know, so lonesome. And, and there were times when we weren't really together. He may be downstairs watching TV or sitting there talking with someone or half asleep, but I was here and I was safe. I, I knew he was here. And I always felt, being 14 years his senior, I would be the 1st to go. And why didn't I, you know? I, I had a hard time figuring that out. And then my minister said, "Well, you're not supposed to know that. You're

not, that's not, that's not in your area. You don't know. You don't know. You were left here maybe for a purpose." And I said, "What other purpose am I here for?," you know. For sadness or something like that. It was ...

RW-N: So your church has helped you a great deal?

OC: Oh, yes.

RW-N: And your friends?

OC: And my friends.

RW-N: And ...

OC: And I went back to the Bahamas. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) I went back, I, I don't know that I'll go again, but I, I just had to go back. And when I got there, we -- see, we've been going since '80 -- since oh, '79 or '80. We had been going every year (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) and uh, I've run into people and I -- now these are people who worked in the casinos and the hotels and places say, "Seem like something's missing. There's something. . ." I said, "What?" "Where's that man you used to be with?" [chuckles] You know, and people remembered and I said, "Well, maybe I, maybe I don't need to go back anymore, (AB: Mmm-hmm.) but uh. . ."

RW-N: Why did you feel you needed to go back?

OC: I don't know, just sort of bring closure to something because we had just come -- we came back on a Monday and he was gone that following Saturday.

RW-N: So you went the next year or the year after that?

OC: The year after. I didn't (RW-N: Mmm-hmm.) go the next year. I went last year. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm.) But I was lonesome. And, and I went with friends. I didn't go alone. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm.) I went with friends, but I was still -- when you go to your room at

night, you're still alone, you know. (RW-N: Right.) There were, uh, friends, uh, we had made, uh, who lived in Chicago and this girl I called, she said, "Now David's gone, you get yourself together and come on and go." And uh, there were 16 of them, but I didn't feel any less lonely. (AB: Mmm-hmm) I was still, still lonesome.

RW-N: I want to ask you one more question about this and let me tell you why I'm asking – Um, I know this is, this had to be a very hard time in your life and I'm, I'm trying to understand better how you manage hard times in your life and you've told me that you have friends and you have church and that it's still lonely. What do you do when you're alone? Do you put this in the, the hands of God?

OC: I do.

RW-N: Do you stay busy?

OC: I do, I do. I, I, I'm not as busy as I should be, but uh, I, I sleep well at night. Things -- I've had so many reverses. David was kind of people he gave, gave, gave, gave, gave, and, and now people who owed him just plenty of money [chuckles] don't seem to want to, uh, (AB: Pay that money.) pay that money (AB: Mmm hmm.) and I, I have to get attorney, an attorney to, to see what he can do [inaudible]

RW-N: So you're coping with a lot of, (OC: I'm coping. . .) you're coping with other things too?

OC: With a lot of hard choices, hard things, I, I really am.

RW-N: You seem to me, when I talk to you, to be kind of a high-spirited woman though.

OC: Well, I've got, I've got to get through it though, you know. I have, uh, uh -- I had -- David had, had some real estate. Uh, I've tried to sell it. Some of it I've sold and some I haven't been

able -- the people won't pay me their rent and I have to put the, the, take them to, to court and I have so many things to do that, that when I go to bed at night maybe I'm so tired [chuckles] I can't do anything but sleep.

RW-N: So you sleep well.

OC: But I do sleep well and, and uh -- because of when I wake in the morning, I said, "Well, I hope I don't do anything today that will hurt anybody, that will harm anybody. Uh, I want to do the right thing and uh, if I can make it through today, I'll be thankful and that, that's my attitude, one day at a time. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm.) And, and although I've been coping with this thing for almost 3 years and uh, I maybe see the light at the end of the tunnel. You know, there may be some real good days ahead. I, I don't know.

RW-N: So do I understand correctly now when you came to Logan as a young woman to take your 1st teaching job that you have stayed here ever since?

OC: Ever since.

RW-N: So you've built a new life in Logan.

OC: A new life, new life, but I, I used to go back to Montgomery all the time, but my mother has since passed and uh, I don't go, I don't^{go} there too much. So many people have left Montgomery and died. I just have 1 or 2 very close friends and I call them or they call me every once in a while. Other than that, I don't, uh. . . .

RW-N: It seems then that you have kept some friends for a long time?

OC: I have, I have. I have a couple friends in Montgomery. Chiles and his wife.

RW-N: Fred is that?

OC: Fred.

(AB:)
RW-N: Uh-huh, Jackie you know, Fred?

OC: And Jackie, we sort of grew up together.

RW-N: Yes, uh-huh, yes.

OC: They're very, very -- we're very close.

RW-N: Uh-huh.

AB: And you knew the Carters then? Tom and Emma?

OC: Oh, why yes, Tom and Emma. I taught Stymie.

AB: You taught Stymie. You know Stymie's wife died?

OC: Yes, I heard that she had passed and he's still here.

RW-N: So you still talk to these friends?

OC: Oh yes, I talk to, uh, to Jackie, we call her -- not too long ago. Fred's in a nursing home so we, we talk to each other. Fred and I were classmates, high school classmates. So we just sort of, and I think I'm the only one who can just lay him out [inaudible], you know, tell him he's so cantankerous and just like his daddy and [chuckles] we fuss all the time. But, uh -- and those are the only ones I have in Montgomery. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) See Emma and Tommy are both gone and Stymie, I said, "Stymie, have you been to Montgomery?" And he says, "Nobody in Montgomery" when he comes for homecoming. So uh I, I have a lot of friends here in Logan, very close friends, very close friends so we do -- I do very well. I, in fact, I buried my mother here in Logan and, and uh -- her sister because I knew, I, I figured I would be here for the rest of my life so I had them buried here.

RW-N: Now when did your mother die? If you told us that I'm sorry.

OC: She died, she died in 1978.

RW-N: Mmm hmm.

AB: And how old was she?

OC: 83.

RW-N: Uh-huh. I'd like to ask you a little bit more about your mother. When you look back, um, at your mother, how would you describe her, like in 3 words? Or you can certainly give us more than 3 words, but. . .

OC: Well, she was, uh -- I thought, a lovely person. The best cook in the world. Everybody thinks their mother is a good cook, but I thought she was exceptionally good except she liked a lot of salt. And uh, she, she, uh, she worked hard most of her life. She worked uh, uh, well what we call "in service" and uh, the, the lady she worked for, for about -- off and on for about 30, 35 years, well, she moved to Charleston and wanted my mother to go there and live with her, you know, take care of her. Well, she, she didn't do that. She worked, uh, she worked as a school cook and uh, that was before the government took over the hot lunch program and I had a lot of little cousins going to school there and, and she was giving them their lunch every day and not making any money. And then their friends would come and say, "I'm Joe, I'm here, too. I'm here, too." And she would just give everybody hamburgers and, and uh, anyway, she was very kind-hearted, very, very lovely.

RW-N: And you got along well with her?

OC: Oh, yes, and ...

RW-N: Even when you were a teenager?

OC: We got along well. She was the boss when I was a teenager. [chuckles] We got along very well, very, very well. And she would, uh, she could al -- she had such -- I thought she had such

excellent taste. She was shapely. She had pretty legs and she was just tiny-waisted and she -- and I said, I just thought she was good-looking. I, I, she -- in fact, I, I have a picture somewhere I can't put my hands on it, but this was in the early days when she was a young lady. She had on a beaver or seal coat with the beaver hat and, and high-top shoes that were laced. I, I -- the picture's somewhere. I don't know where it is. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) But uh I thought she was very stylish and she could go, she could go in the cheapest store and come out with something that was -- that looked great. I remember, uh, when I, when Dr. Elliot and I married, he had to entertain his fraternity and uh, my mother came over to help me cook [chuckles] and do the curtains and so, uh -- she said, "Oh, I don't have a dress. I forgot to bring my dress." And we went to town and she saw this store. I said, "Oh, you - - we don't go in that store. You can't -- no... that ." M. R. Brothers or something, no -- And she went in there and found the prettiest dress, you know, that, that was, would suit the occasion. She was just going to cook. It was a blue and white striped cotton dress. And I said, "Mama, how can you do that?" But she could. She could find things for me that I would never, I'd look over. You know, she was just that type. Some people can shop [AB: Chuckles] and find things and I could spend all day at uh Schwabe-May [AB: Chuckles] and spend a fortune and still come out with something I didn't like. [AB: chuckles] But she was not like that .

RW-N: Are there ways though that you are like her? You don't have her shopping skills.

OC: I don't have her shopping skills, but I think, I think I'm sort of like she is. I like a clean place although this is, this doesn't measure up because I'm not physically able to keep it like that.

But uh, I, I think we're very much alike.

RW-N: How else are you alike?

OC: Well, we both had glaucoma. [chuckles] Uh, . . .

AB: Did she lose her sight at the end of her life?

OC: Almost, almost. She, she had cancer when she died. She had uh, uh, what do you call it? Cervical cancer. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) But uh, she didn't, she didn't lose her sight. She, she, uh, . . . but I don't think she used -- she took her medicine as she should because I could never get her to come here and live. She just absolutely refused.

AB: So she stayed in Charleston?

OC: Stayed in Montgomery.

AB: In Montgomery.

OC: She stayed in Montgomery until she was bedfast. And I went to Montgomery and uh, she was in the hospital. And they uh, the supervisor said that she would have to be attended by someone. She couldn't stay alone. See, she was staying alone and I said, "Okay." That was all I wanted to hear. I called the ambulance, called David, told him, see, there's another apartment over here. (AB: Mmm hmm.) It was the same size as this side is. (AB: Mmm hmm.) Brought her over here and cared for her until the time of her death. (AB: Mmm hmm.)

AB: And you brought your aunt up, too, when she was ill?

OC: My aunt died in Columbus, but, but they brought her to Montgomery for her funeral and we buried her here. (AB: Mmm-hmm) That was my mother's sister.

AB: And your, your step-father is buried in Charleston?

OC: My step-father is buried in -- near Cedar Grove. There used to be a cemetery there. It's been -- Fred's father and mother are buried there. There is a cemetery, uh, that is below the new cemetery. There's a new cemetery along the road somewhere.

AB: There are 2. There's one, one right across from Washington High and . . .

OC: That's Montgomery. . .

AB: . . . the one down below it.

OC: That's Montgomery Memorial Park.

AB: Okay, and there's one down below that.

OC: Then there's Kanawha Valley whatever it was then. Now there, there was one even below that, (AB: Mmm hmm.) but that's probably destroyed (AB: Mmm hmm.) now, but that's where my step-father was buried in 1940. (AB: Uh huh.) See that's been 50 (AB: -- been a long time.) some years ago.

AB: What about your father?

OC: My father, I buried him in South Carolina.

AB: Uh-huh, what part of South Carolina?

OC: It was a little place called, uh -- Gaffney, (AB: Yeah) right out of, right out of uh, uh -- Charlotte. (AB: Mmm hmm.) It's just about an hour from Charlotte. So I buried him there because his 2nd wife was buried there (AB: Mmm hmm.) and when I went there, uh, her people were, were very kind to me and so we just buried him right there beside her.

AB: What about your brother?

OC: My brother's buried in the, in the uh, Army cemetery, or whatever you call it, in Nashville, Tennessee. That's where he married after he retired.

AB: He didn't marry until he retired?

OC: No, no, he married before he retired. (AB: Oh) He married while, uh, he was -- I don't know where he was -- while he was in service. (AB: Uh-huh) And I know when they were living

at Institute that's when their boy was born. He has a son. And then when he retired they went to her home in Nashville. (AB: Mmm-hmm) So that's where he's buried, (AB: Mmm-hmm) in a military grave, I guess. (AB: Mmm-hmm)

RW-N: Now you said that you were quite close to your brother when you were growing up, uh, but he, of course, spent his life in the military and you were in Logan. How did you maintain that relationship?

OC: Well, now -- they visited. They came here when he was at Institute, he and his wife used to come over and we used to go over there, but then, uh, he, I think, maybe went to Japan or other places and he finally settled in Nashville. But I went to Nashville several times, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) several times to visit him.

RW-N: So he remained . . .

OC: We remained close.

RW-N: He remained an important figure in your life (OC: He did. He really did.) even though you were geographically separated.

OC: Right, right.

RW-N: Uh, could I switch gears for a moment, go back to teaching?

OC: Do anything you wish. [chuckles] I, I'm yours. I just hope this turns out alright.

RW-N: Oh, I'm sure it will.

AB: Oh, it will.

RW-N: I'd like to ask you how you see yourself as a teacher? What kind of a teacher you were, how you would describe that?

OC: Oh, I couldn't rate myself. I did the best I could and I have, uh, I do have parents who will

at one point say, "Oh, I, I'm glad that you taught my child." Now when somebody tells you that it uh, uh makes you feel good. I remember a little girl uh -- they used to tell me that -- I, I had cheerleaders, and they used to tell me, "Oh, you're supposed to let your shoes be dirty. You're supposed to . . ." "Uh-uh, that's not the style, rough." And, and uh, they'd have pins in their skirt to hold up the hem (RW-N: Mmm-hmm, mmm-hmm) and I'd make them sit down and sew the hem or polish their shoes and do. And one parent, she said, "I'm so glad you got a hold of that girl. I don't know what to do." Well, that, that really, you know, makes you feel good even though it wasn't book material, it was something that they could use for the rest of. . . She said, "Now Terry Jane won't go out of the house unless her shoes are clean or unless the hem's sewn in her dress." So that, that makes you feel good. And, and another instance when I retired, my kids lined up to say goodbye and uh, I had this little boy, little roly-poly boy. He was in line. They all came up to give me a hug. Well, I noticed he would come up, hug me and I'd look and he's back in line. Then he, he came up 2 or 3 times and I said, "Why are you coming. . . ?" He said, "Oh, I just don't want you to go. I'm gonna keep on hugging you." [laughter] Then you know, that makes you feel good. He would hug, and I -- at, at one time I thought he was the meanest child. [chuckles] But uh, you know, it gives you a good feeling and I remember I was called to the office to the telephone and I said, "Now I want everybody to be real quiet because we're right next door to the office." And uh, I said, "If you're not, I'll give you 5 licks in your hand." So I came back, all day, I could hear them, they were just having a ball so I said, "Okay, I told you I was going to give everybody 5," I said, "everybody except, uh, Lisa and her sister." "We were talking too." [laughter] They wanted to. . .

AB: They wanted to be part of the group, (OC: Right, they didn't. . .) get their 5 licks.

[chuckles]

OC: Right. They didn't want to be set aside. But it's -- you know, I've had some very nice experiences with the children and uh, . . .

AB: Were you a stern teacher?

OC: I don't think I was. I don't think I was stern, but some of the kids may have thought it, but, uh, . . .

RW-N: Were you too easy?

OC: No, I wasn't too easy. I wasn't too easy. I don't think. But I don't think I was stern. I . . . we, we had, I, I remember, uh, last summer we -- Aracoma High School alumni has a, a celebration every year. We have a reunion every year and this particular time we were in Columbus and uh, one of my former cheerleaders invited all the cheerleaders she could find to her home -- her home was simply magnificent -- and me. So they told the tales on me that you ne. . . I had never heard. And and one, I remember they said uh, uh, "Yes, we would say this yell 'Our team is red hot. Your team ain't doodly squat.' Said but when you see that little red coat. . ." I wore, I don't know, I've always had a red winter coat -- have one now. Said, "If you see that red winter coat, you'd better not say that." [laughter] And they would just, they just sat there and they told all sorts of tales on me, but it, but it, it was nice that they thought enough of me to, to sort of celebrate, you know, and, and, and the girl had had maybe 15 or 20 cheerleaders and they, they cooked, they barbecued and she had even had some help to come in, and you know, help her. She and her husband did this for me. And she had lived in Logan years, uh, ago in, in, in near poverty, but she had brought herself up, you know, from the ranks and just made a good life for herself, and uh, that made me feel good.

AB: If we could back up, you were at Aracoma for 17 years. (OC: Mmm-hmm) What did you do when Aracoma closed?

OC: I was sent to Omar Junior High School. (AB: Mmm-hmm) That was when the little boy got in the line and when I was ready to retire.

AB: Right. So you stayed at Omar then until you retired?

OC: Uh-huh, 17 years at both schools.

AB: How did you find uh that experience as compared -- cause you were going now into a white school? (OC: Right) How did you find that?

OC: No problem. No problem. I was, I was leery at 1st because there were only . . there were 3 of us sent to, to that school, 1 man, 2 women. And uh, I had, I had no inclination of what I was gonna run into because I didn't know until a week before that I was going to Omar. And I had just married, maybe 2 weeks before that so this. . .

RW-N: You were just assigned?

OC: Just assigned, and, and by the paper, see, this, this thing was sort of touchy for a while.

They had closed Aracoma amidst a lot of argument and cause the board of education had spent thousands on remodeling the school.

AB: Is that because they did not want to integrate?

OC: I don't think that was it. The board of education had spent all this money on remodeling the school because the coach and I went over and begged for an enlarged auditorium and, and playing surface and bleachers and we got them. And we got the library. We got the new home economics lab and so they had sunk all this money into the school and then they had to close it. Well, now, now some people say, well, they closed it because Aracoma had such a great junior

high basketball team. And those kids were going over into senior high school, so there were all sorts of rumors floating around. But uh, when I got there, I said, "Betty, I don't know what this is going to be like." And do you know a little child came down the steps, a little white girl and took me by the hand and led me up the steps. Now, I don't know if she were assigned to do that or, you know, whether it was a -- but she sort of broke ranks because here's all this crowd standing out here, 3 Negro teachers, 1 man, 2 women. And I never had any problem, never had a problem except -- and that was no problem for me. Some of the white teachers didn't like it. They had a substitute in there once and we had this little lounge about 1/3 the size of this room and uh they told me as I got up out of a chair, another -- a white teacher, substitute, got a cloth and wiped out the chair before she sat down. But one of the white teachers didn't like it and reported it to the principal. She never came back. He never hired her any more. But uh I, I had no problem.

AB: No problem with the parents?

OC: No problem with the parents, no problem, no problem at all. I never did. Now I had some mean kids and some good ones, both black and white. Kids are kids.

RW-N: What do you mean "mean", just about about racial issues (OC: No, no, no.) or they were just hard to handle?

OC: Just hard to handle. Some, one little girl, I could never stop her from talking even while I was trying to teach. And uh, I'd move her and she'd say, "Well, I'll sit over here if that will make you happy." And you know, she was just a, just a mouthy little thing. But that, you know, that was no big problem. I, I really didn't, and I can honestly say that I had one of the nicest principals, now the kids -- some of the teachers did not like him because he meant what he said.

If teachers or kids started decorating for Christmas at Thanksgiving he'd say, "This is not Christmas. Take that stuff down." You know, and they'd say, "Oh, Scrooge is on the warpath," you know, and "Chatman, you go in. . . ." And I'd say, "Uh-uh, he's too nice to me. I'm not going to tell him anything." [laughter] See, they were always putting me up for . . . "You know, he, he, -- you'll do, -- he'll do anything you ask him." I used to -- the principals had an organization and whenever they came to our school, he would say, "Chatman, see if you can get something together. I've got to entertain the principals." And you go and get the food or whatever it is and prepare it and whatever. I would do that, get shrimp or whatever, you know, the cost is no problem. And uh they, they would say, "Chatman, you do it." "No, I'm not gonna do it. Mr. Tinkle is nice to me. [AB" Chuckles] I'm not pulling chestnuts for you." But they would always put me up to do, but then he, he became, he became ill and died, something like David, and, of course, I had retired then and one teacher says, "Chatman, you were so right about him." Said, "He was a good man." I said, "Why are you just now realizing? The man's gone, you know." But uh, I didn't have any problem. They, they gave me the loveliest party when I retired and some sort of *This Is Your Life* (A: Mmm hmm.) thing and they just, they just, just treated me like royalty.

AB: Do you -- what did you teach there?

OC: I taught phys ed (AB: Mmm-hmm) and health. I taught civics. I taught uh -- well then when they put me in the library, see, I was not certified in library science, but somehow he had found out that I worked in the library at West Virginia State. I worked under Mrs. (AB: Drain.) Drain, Leonead Drain and Mr. Jefferson. (AB: Mmm-hmm) So uh, when they, they moved one of our teachers, our librarian, to Logan High School, and he says, uh, "Chatman, you worked at, yeah,

you worked in the library [inaudible].” So they gave me a spelling class just to say I was teaching something, but I was in fact (AB: In charge...) in charge of the library. I, I’ve taught a little bit of everything except home economics. I think maybe I substituted one year for a teacher in Montgomery in home ec, but uh, -- I, I enjoyed my years teaching. I [inaudible word].

AB: Did you, do you have any friends, did you make any white . . .

END OF TAPE 1 - SIDE 2

BEGINNING TAPE 2 - SIDE 1

RW-N: It’s October 8th, 1999. We’re in the home of Mrs. Chatman for our 2nd interview in Logan. Ancella Bickley and Rita Wicks-Nelson interviewing. Okay.

AB: I’m looking at some plaques that Mrs. Chatman has shared with us. One is from the Aracoma High, Aracoma High School Reunion, 1995, “New Carrollton, Maryland presents to Ottrus Chatman for your outstanding devotion and dedicated service to the athletic department and for molding the minds of the students at Aracoma High School, July 27th, 1995, Aracoma Reunion Committee.” And here’s one, Mrs. Chatman, that says, “I Stand Amazed, Love, Rosetta.” I wonder if you will tell us about that one.

OC: Alright, this was uh, each year we, we went to, uh, Hampton, Virginia to take part in workshops dealing with conducting gospel music. And uh, the song I chose to conduct after we came back to Logan was *I Stand Amazed*, a beautiful hymn and uh, the people who heard it were quite pleased with it and Rosetta, a friend, had this plaque made in, uh, my honor and each other conductress had a favorite song and she gave each one a plaque with their song title on it.

AB: That was really a nice gift.

OC: It was nice and the convention honored, recently honored Mrs. Betty Smith and me by

giving us around four hundred dollars and a nice, uh, send-off one evening, quite surprised, last year.

AB: That's wonderful. This plaque says, "Presented to Ottrus E. Chatman, Secretary, for your many years of dedicated service, district and state-wide, endear you to the members of your chapter, sincerely Queen of Sheba chapter, number 8, Order of Eastern Star." And that's October 22nd, 1994. Have you been a member of the uh Eastern Star for very long?

OC: 50 years.

AB: 50 years.

OC: That will be 50 years next April.

AB: And what exactly is the Eastern Star?

OC: Eastern Star is an organization of, uh, Christian women, uh, whose names are, uh, taken from biblical characters, Ruth, Esther, Martha, Electa, and Ada. We are an auxiliary, I would say, or sisters, wives, widows, daughters of Masons. We are, are the female counter-part to the Mason Lodge.

AB: And this one, would you read that for us, please?

OC: Presented to Mrs. Ottrus Chatman for faithful service to Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church, Logan, 3-22-98. This date, I was made mother of the church.

AB: And that's your home church here in . . .

OC: This is my home church here in Logan.

AB: And how long have you been a member of that church?

OC: Since 1962 when David and I married.

AB: What about this one?

OC: This one is, uh, "For Lifetime Membership in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People."

AB: And this one is a nice one. It's in the shape of the state, a map of West Virginia.

OC: This is, uh, West Virginia State College National Alumni Association, Life Member, Class of 1940. I became a lifetime member in 1986.

AB: And this one? [chuckles]

OC: This is "To Ottrus Chatman in appreciation for 36 years of dedicated teaching service, presented by Omar Junior High School for 17 years with us, 19 hundred 79." The year I retired I taught at our, at the junior high for 17 years and at the high school prior to that for 17 years.

AB: So you had 34 years in . . .

OC: In Logan county.

AB: In Logan county.

OC: Right.

AB: And there's one other there, Mrs. Chatman, that we had and didn't get.

RW-N: But we did get.

AB: Did we get that one?

RW-N: How about the one over there, Ancella, did you get that one?

AB: Mmm-hmm. We just got that one.

RW-N: That was the one that I brought down there.

AB: Oh, this is the Aracoma High School Reunion, 1995, New Carrollton, Maryland. Did you all have your . . .

OC: Every year we go to a different place for alumni reunion and at that particular time, the

chapter presented several of us with awards for outstanding service to the school.

AB: Now this one awards you for your dedicated services to the athletic department.

OC: Well, I was physical education teacher. And along with that, I was chairman of the athletic committee which at that time was sort of burdensome and hard because of a shortage of funds or scarcity of funds, but uh, there were several of us honored that night.

AB: Well, it seems as if you have had a productive and well rewarded career.

OC: It has been and, and, and I was thinking the other morning that there was never a day that I regretted or dreaded going to work. And, and it, it just struck me all at once, said, "Was there ever a time when you didn't want to go to work at?" I can't remember a day. I can remember going with, in bad weather and cars skidding and maybe turning around making a one-what is it? — one hundred-eighty degree turn back home, but never did I feel that I didn't want to go to work that day. I have enjoyed teaching.

AB: That's good. I think there's nothing worse than to hate what you do.

OC: You're right, you're right.

RW-N: Uh, wh -- what brought you to retirement, given that you still love to teach even at the end of that teaching career?

OC: I really don't know. Uh, I guess maybe it was just -- but then I didn't quit. I taught 2 years after retirement. Maybe I, I hadn't retired, but uh, one thing being here with the, uh, funeral home and both of us teaching was a little difficult for, for both of us to be away. Uh, we, his uncle stayed here during the day and at that time we didn't have call forwarding or, or call-waiting or any of the modern things that we have now because I can put my telephone in my pocketbook and go wherever I want to go and answer the telephone from my church or wherever.

RW-N: So when you retired after 34 years, you still taught after that?

OC: I taught 2 years, really as a substitute, but it was practically every day.

RW-N: It was very steady?

OC: In fact, I couldn't, I, I don't think I could teach any more than 100 days. But I, I usually did those 100 days; in fact, the principal said, "Well, why don't you just come out of retirement and, and keep on teaching for a while because we really are short of teachers?" But I didn't do that.

RW-N: So you were substitute teaching and then of course, all the time you were helping to run the funeral home?

OC: Right, right.

AB: So then you had, uh, before you got a full-time position, you had about 3 years of substitute teaching?

OC: Right.

AB: And then you taught for 34 years, then you had about 2 more years of substitute teaching?

OC: Right, absolutely.

AB: So you really have about 39 years (OC: Right about.) classroom time.

OC: Classroom time, you're correct because when I 1st began substituting at one time, a teacher could call you just to teach half day. If they didn't feel like getting out that snowy morning, then they'd call me. I'd come in and teach until 11 or 12 o'clock and they'd say, "Cut." So finally, this was in Fayette County, finally they stopped the practice because they thought it was unfair and, and they paid the teacher the full amount and left the teacher up to pay you for that half day. Sometimes they would, sometimes they wouldn't so the, the board of education just stopped the practice of having a person -- if you called a substitute, they had to teach the entire day.

AB: When we were talking the other day, I don't think I got your brother's 1st name.

OC: My -- I meant to get his picture. My brother's 1st name was James Burke.

AB: James Burke.

OC: The same as my father and my nephew, his son. There are 3 James Burke.

AB: And where does your nephew live?

OC: Nashville, Tennessee.

AB: In Nashville.

OC: Mmm-hmm.

RW-N: There's something else that, uh -- when we listened to the tape that we were, at least I was a little confused about. When you 1st went to West Virginia State, you went 1 year and the .

OC: I went 1 year and part of another year.

RW-N: Part of another year, and then you did not go back right away?

OC: No.

RW-N: In fact, it was quite a long time that you didn't go back. Is that true?

OC: Not a long time, not a long, not a long time. I, I as I recall, I, let's see, I went in '33.

RW-N: You graduated from Simmons in '33 and went right on to State. Is that right?

OC: Went right on to State. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) Then I started back in '34, but I didn't stay that entire year. And then I think I went back in '36. I, I, I'm just not too clear, clear on . . .

RW-N: I know, the dates are hard to keep track.

OC: . . . on those dates. But I did graduate in '40 or '41. (RW-N: '41.) (AB: Uh . . .) Either '40...

AB: This plaque says "Class of 1940."

OC: '40, that's right.

AB: So. . .

RW-N: Uh-huh, okay, so uh-huh.

OC: Because that came from the record at State, I didn't give that.

RW-N: And then it was soon after that that you, um, started your work at Ohio State University?

OC: Ohio State University, around about, uh -- Let's see, if I graduated in '40, I taught a full year around about '41 or '42 then I went to. . . Oh, I forgot to tell you I worked in Washington, D.C. one summer in the Munitions Department during World War II. And that next summer, I went to graduate school, but the date escapes me.

RW-N: Now you didn't finish your work in 1 summer, did you?

OC: No, no.

RW-N: Did you go back just in the summers or did you stay?

OC: Just in the summers, (RW-N: In the summers.) just in the summers, right.

RW-N: So you worked at it over a period of time and then got that master's degree.

OC: Just in the summers.

AB: And you were supporting yourself through that uh period?

OC: Well, at the time, you know, when I went to graduate school, blacks were not allowed to go to graduate school in West Virginia (AB: So you got state help.) and the state sent me to out of the state. They paid any other state for me to go to school. So uh, most of the time -- I had lots of relatives in Columbus and uh, they helped me quite a bit. Well, I had dinner with them every day and, and uh once I worked a little bit in a hotel -- uh, waitress in the afternoon, go to class during the day. And that furnished my . . . [phone rings, tape stopped]

AB: First, during the years that you were out of West Virginia State College, how -- did you

work during that period?

OC: Yes, I did. I worked; I babysat. I worked uh, uh, as a maid, you know, cleaning and working for -- I worked, I remember working for a doctor and his family.

AB: In Charleston?

OC: In Montgomery.

AB: In Montgomery.

OC: And uh, just worked to try to earn enough money to, to start, ba -- start back to school.

And of course, my stepfather, uh, was fortunate in getting money from the, uh, a bonus that they paid veterans after World War I, um, so I went back to school.

RW-N: And you lived with your mother and stepfather during that time?

OC: Yes, yes.

AB: And the other question, when you decided to go to graduate school, how did you find out that the state would help pay for your way to graduate school? Do you remember how you learned about that?

OC: I don't know how I found that, found out. Maybe because someone else had gone before me. I, I, I really don't know. (AB: Mmm-hmm) I don't, I honestly can't, I'm trying to recall. I do remember I had friends here in Logan, that seems strange, who were in school with me at West Virginia State College, who were attending Ohio State University. Now it may have been through them, Elaine Meadows Miles, Rosetta Davis were in school at, uh, Ohio State when I went there, they were already there.

AB: Is that what made you choose Ohio State?

OC: It may have been. It, it may have been. I'm not sure. But that, that was a break for me

because I couldn't go to school in West Virginia so I, I went to Ohio State.[murmurs]

AB: And you went straight through? I mean summer after summer -- but...

OC: One summer I didn't go. I think there was 1 summer I didn't go; in fact, I had sort of given up the idea of going when, when, uh, Dr. Elliot and I married. And then my mother, he and my mother, sort of teamed up on me and said, "Well, there's no need to, you know, to quit school simply because you're married." So they just, they insisted and I plowed on. [chuckles]

AB: Where did you live when you and Dr. Elliot were married? Did you all have a house here in Logan?

OC: I lived here in Logan. I, I, in fact, I still own that house. I'm renting it. It's in a little town called Aracoma. Did you, you did interview Mrs. Hise?

AB: Yes.

OC: I lived 2 doors below her.

AB: Alright.

OC: Right in the same, same area.

AB: And did Dr. Elliot spend his time though down at Denmar? Did he just come home on weekends or . . . ?

OC: His last, last year, last 2 years were spent at Denmar. He followed Dr. Nelson. I, do you remember him?

AB: Sure. Mmm hmm, mmm hmm.

OC: Okay. But he practiced medicine here in Logan (AB: Mmm-hmm) and the last couple of years he, he was in Denmar.

AB: Um-hmm. Oh, uh, we when we ended the tape last time, we were talking about, uh, the

Civil Rights Movement (OC: Right) and involvement, and how, how did that play out in your life?

Uh. There were any sit-ins or anything like that you participated in?

OC: No, I didn't participate in any sit-ins nor was I around anybody who did. Uh, integration was smooth here in Logan County. Uh, the school was closed and we were assigned other positions.

Uh, some of them were not too pleased and, and rightfully so. To take a black principal and give him a lesser job, a lesser assignment that, than the white person had who probably was just a math teacher and they make him a principal and, and the black principal, reduce him to a lesser position.

So for that reason some of the people left and went to the city. But I had nothing to lose. I was still a classroom teacher.

AB: Mmm hmm. Uh, you, we asked you if you had made any white friends.

OC: Yes.

AB: Would you tell us about that, please?

OC: I did. I made, [coughs] excuse me. I made lots of white friends. Uh, I was especially fond of, of this one person, a Vivian Thompson. And we remain friends today. We've laughed together, cried together and we're just, we're just very close, very close. And I remember when she professed her faith in Christ. She called me to come and sit, you know, with her, uh, when she was baptized. And, and we've just gone through -- when her sister passed and when my husband passed she was among the 1st people to, to come in and, and she just, we just had a very close relationship and I never met her until I went into the integrated school. And we just sort of struck up a friendship. And I remember when I, when I was ready to retire, her oldest sister said, "Well, just don't mention Chatman because Vivian'll start crying." She, you know, she didn't want me to, uh, to quit school, I, I -- quit teaching. I would pick her up in the mornings. And

now whenever anything happens to, uh, someone we know or we knew, she would come for me and take me to the funeral homes or wherever. And we, we've just remained friends.

AB: Do you visit back one another's homes?

OC: We do. She's had me for lunch and uh, she had, David was down. She called just recently, but I was going out of town, and she, or she was going out of town. She had lost a friend in Kentucky. And uh, she said, uh, when she got back she would get in touch with me and we'd go for lunch. So we're, we're still very close, very close.

AB: Was there, uh, any interracial dating at the school at which you worked?

OC: No, it had not gotten to that point, not while I was working. I didn't, I didn't see any. There it -- there may be some now, but there wasn't then. If you recall that was in the late '60's, well from '62 to say '79.

AB: Do you see much of that in Logan now when you're out at the malls or anything?

OC: Well, what little I get out. I, I see, see a little of it, not, not much, not too much.

AB: Do you have any feelings about any of that?

OC: No. I don't, I don't see anything wrong with it if, if the teenagers, they go to school together. I, I don't have any feelings about it.

RW-N: After we left you the last time, I was thinking about your marriage to Mr. Chatman and it seems that it's been, long been an issue that when people married that the woman was the younger one; in fact, we do a lot of teasing about men wanting to marry (OC: Right.) younger women (OC: Right.) and, but Mr. Chatman was several years younger than you.

OC: Not several, more than several. [chuckles]

RW-N: More than several. Was it 14? Do I remember correctly?

OC: It was 14. I was 14 years his senior, but uh, for some reason, it didn't bother us. And, and I think after the community got over the shock, it didn't bother them. Well now, I don't know that they were shocked, I'm just saying that. I might have been shocked if somebody said, "Well, you know, so and so," but uh, . . .

RW-N: Well, you knew each other as teachers. Is that how you 1st met?

OC: That's how we 1st met, (RW-N: So then you. . .) as teachers.

RW-N: So then you were seeing each other for a while. Was there any talk about that?

OC: The children, the school children actually did that. We blamed them because they would say, "Go in, go in there, Mr. Chatman and talk to Mrs. Elliot, go in there and talk." And he would just maybe walk over and we'd stand in the window and talk, a football game, or then a group of us would get together and we would, oh, play cards after football games or something, maybe 8 or 10. And I, I remember one, one weekend, oh, there may have been about 6 or 8 of us at my home and uh, my mother-in-law came in, Dr. Elliot's mother came in from Virginia for the weekend, and she looked at everybody, she was quite old and quite funny. And she says, "Now, uh, I think you ought to get married again." And did you know Eugene Washington? Okay, he was teaching and he was with the group. She said, "Now that little one, I don't know that I like him too well." [chuckles] And said, "But there's a tall one sitting over there in the corner. He looks alright."

You know, she was just sort of surveying the group. And, and uh, David would say months later, and he said, "You know what your mother-in-law said." [chuckles] So we were just, you know, we were really just, just friends, had no idea of, of ever getting married, but you know, one thing led to another and . . . [chuckles] And we went to Maryland to take my aunt; she was going down to visit her daughter in Annapolis, Maryland and while we were there he said, "Well, why don't

we get married while we're down here." And I, you know, I, I was almost in shorts, you know, cause it was in the summer (AB: Mmm hmm.) and we were. . . He said we will go down and take my aunt to, uh, to Maryland and so we married.

AB: While you were away?

OC: While we were in Maryland we married. [chuckles] So when I came back and 2 or 3 days later school started and nobody could -- say, "Well, who's Mrs. Elliot." And I said, "My name's Chatman." "Well, who's Mrs. E. . ." The kids just couldn't understand what was going on because the paper said Mrs. Elliot to Omar Junior High, but Mrs. Elliot didn't show up.

AB: [in unison with OC] Show up. [laughter]

OC: So they were really confused with . . .

RW-N: Did your family say anything about that marriage because of the difference in years?

OC: They were happy about it. It didn't bother them at all.

RW-N: Did they know David already?

OC: They had met him, of course, cause I had taken him to Montgomery. He met my mother and all so and my aunt, my aunt just, just loved him. In fact, my aunt would come over and stay with us and so nobody had any, none of the family had any objection to it.

AB: Do, when you, I guess, began to realize that this was becoming more than just a casual friendship, (OC: Right) did you have any misgivings at all yourself? I mean did you stop and think, "Oh, wait a minute?"

OC: I did, I did and, and I expressed them to him. I said, "Now you know I'm too old. I'm much older than you are." And he said, "Well, that doesn't make any difference to me." I said, "Well, I'm old enough for your mother." [chuckles] But he, you know, but then I said, "Oh, you

just want somebody to cook for you and to iron your shirts.” And I’d, you know, tease him like that, but he just wouldn’t. . . And then he took me over to meet his mother. I didn’t know his mother. She was living in McDowell County. He took me to McDowell County to meet his mother. They were pleased. And she said, “Oh, welcome to the family.” And uh, I mean, and then his aunt, he has had an aunt in Charleston, lived at Pinewood Drive, and he took me by there one weekend for homecoming, West Virginia State homecoming. So, we just, we never had a problem with it. We never did. We liked the same things and just, you know, got along very nicely. Now I’m not gonna say we never had a disagreement, I’m not gonna say that. [chuckles]

AB: Of course, that’s impossible to live with anybody without having some disagreements.

OC: Right, right, right. [laughter] But when he got tired of listening to me, he’d go downstairs and sit so. .uh. . . We got along nicely. And I always thought I never in my wildest dreams thought that I would live longer than he did. So you see, you never know.

AB: You never know.

OC: You never know. I just, I often wanted to question God about that, but my minister said, “It’s not yours to question so just leave it alone.”

AB: Mmm-hmm. Mmm-hmm. When we were talking with a lady down in Charleston who was a member of the Charleston Women’s Improvement League, and they have, ^{do} you know ^{there’s} a club, black women’s club down there.

OC: I know.

AB: They have as a motto, uh, “Lifting as we climb.”

OC: [in unison with AB] We climb. I belong to a branch of that. We had, we have here in Logan called Logan County Women’s Federated Club (AB: Uh-huh) set up by Jane Spaulding. Now

you ought to remember her.

AB: Mmm-hmm, very instrumental [inaudible] .

OC: That was one of the, it used to be several organizations across the state and we had . . . we would have a state meeting every year.

AB: Does that Federated Club, does that still exist?

OC: It still exists, but it's so tiny now. We met last Saturday to decide what we were gonna do for holiday. We work with the, uh, Salvation Army by filling socks for kids, you know, for toys and things like that. And uh, we give to a church at Thanksgiving. We're so small now, but uh, we're still active.

AB: Well, the group, I was thinking about that because they sort of took as part of their responsibility helping other black people. (OC: Right) Do, did you see that as something you should do beyond any kind of membership in a club or so? Have you ever felt responsible for other black people, that there are things that you ought to do?

OC: Well, I, I do feel like there could be more that I cou -- I could do. I'm sure there is, but sometimes you, and, and, and maybe I'm too sensitive, uh, sometimes you, you back off because of fear of being criticized. You know, it's oh, she's just doing it, you know. Now, now that's perhaps the wrong attitude to take, but I see a lot of things I would like to do. For example, I, I saw in the Charleston paper several months ago, about this young girl who was going into West Point. (AB: Mmm hmm.) And I, I so wanted to, to send that girl something, you know, but then it's "Oh, she's just trying. . .", you know. (AB: Mmm hmm.) Now, now, now I was serious and I have talked about it with the young man that works for me. And he said, "Well, you know people will say you're just doing it for a big name or something like. . ." But I see a lot of things

that I would like to do and I don't. (AB: Mmm-hmm.) Maybe I should.

AB: Just an observation, I don't think that, uh, organizations function quite that way much anymore. I remember the Delta's used to have the Better Teeth Ball. . .

OC: Better Teeth Ball, right, they, and they helped the Kanawha County Dental. I heard something on TV about that and I said, "I wonder whatever happened to the Delta's and the Better . . . because if you said "Delta" in Charleston, the next word would be "better teeth."

(AB: Mmm-hmm) You know, in fact, they used to give these little kits to kids and Dr. Clark^E in Williamson used to support us over here, we'd, in our small way would go around and give the kids these little kits, you know.

AB: That's Verona's husband.

RW-N: I wondered about that.

OC: Uh-huh. Have you seen her recently?

AB: Yes, we interviewed her.

OC: Is that right?

AB: Mmm-hmm.

OC: Yeah, I saw her last . . .

AB: ^{and} Bobbie Jean. [Mrs. Clarke's daughter]

OC: . . . last spring. Mmm-hmm, yes, she's, she's around in my age group. Right.

AB: In terms of, of being a black woman, uh, black women haven't, I guess, been terribly much involved with the feminist movement. Uh, have you paid much attention to what's gone on with women's movement kinds of things?

OC: Not really, not -- except what I've watched on, on television. I, I see that it has come a long

way. Uh, when, when the movement 1st began, it, it has gathered more impetus, you know, in the recent years from what I've gathered, you know, just by reading or seeing, you know, you see women on the Supreme Court, see women in key positions throughout our government, women mayors, women governors, women running for president and things like that, uh...

RW-N: Do you see that as good, as progress?

OC: Well, yes, cause at one time they were, it was unheard of, you know. Women were relegated to the home and, and of course, there, there have been women in medicine for a long time, but they weren't accepted as, as, really as they are now, (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) I don't think.

AB: You know, you remember Mrs. Goldston?

OC: Do I? Ma Goldston?

AB: Mrs. Goldston...

OC: I remember the one before Ms. Goldston, Mrs. Benson.

AB: Mrs. Goldston used to tell me, "I don't care, I'm for women, but there are just certain things that I don't want to see a woman do."

OC: Right, right, right, right.

AB: [laughing] That always. . .

OC: Well now, I still feel that way. You know, just today, Mohammad Ali's daughter is going into the boxing ring to box a man. I don't think she should do that. That's, you know, me personally.

RW-N: But would you feel okay if she became a Supreme Court Justice?

OC: Yes, yes, yes.

AB: Or President of the United States?

OC: Yes.

RW-N: Right.

OC: But I wouldn't want to see her boxing.

RW-N: So there's a few things that you . . .

OC: A few things I don't wanna see. . .

AB: Could she be your minister?

OC: Yes.

AB: You could have a female minister?

OC: I could have a female minister.

RW-N: Do you like men boxing?

OC: I don't like boxing and wrestling in any form. (RW-N: Yes) But, oh, I'd hate, I, I, I don't want to see, oh gosh, that just, you know, it frightens me.

RW-N: So you, you certainly don't want to see a woman doing it?

OC: No indeed, no indeed.

RW-N: So you, you think that women should have all the opportunities possible to (OC: I think they do. . .) pick and choose to do with their lives?

OC: . . . to do what they, what they'd like to do, yes, -- but, but not, not -- there's some things I just think women have no business doing.

RW-N: Do you think that life has improved for black women? I mean, (OC: Yes,yes.) do you think they have greater opportunities?

OC: I think they do. I think they do, I really do.

AB: Uh, do you think that your life has been circumscribed by being a woman?

OC: I'm not sure I get what. . .

AB: ^{I mean, are}
the things that you have not been able to do that you might have wanted to do, I mean, you, you couldn't do because you were a woman?

OC: No, no, I don't think so. I, I, I think I've been able to do anything I wanted to do. The only reason it wasn't done was because I didn't do it, you know; if I make myself clear. I don't think there's anything that would keep me from doing what I wanted to do.

AB: You think that was true for your mother too?

OC: No, I don't think it was true for her.

AB: Why not?

OC: Well, maybe one thing was the lack of education, lack of opportunity, but if, if, if she had the uh same training perhaps she, she could, the sky would be the limit to what she could attain.

AB: What about being a black person? Do you think that being black has kept you from doing anything that you wanted to do?

OC: No, I don't think so.

AB: You have not been held back by race?

OC: I, I haven't been, no.

AB: So if you could change things, if you could change your life in any way, is there anything that you would like to do that you haven't done or . . . ?

OC: No.

AB: Any other path that you might have taken?

OC: No, no, not now, I don't think so. I, I tell you when I was in high school, I wanted to go to New York and dance. You know, I wanted to be on the stage. I think that's one reason I chose

physical education, but my mother said, "Oh, you just selling yourself to the devil." You know how people would look upon dancing and things like that. So uh, I, I went on to college. I chose phys ed and for a long time they thought I was taking secretarial training. [chuckles] So. . .

AB: This is your mother?

OC: But uh, no, I don't think I would change. I, I really don't. My life has been full and uh, where maybe I don't have all the material things that I would love to have had, I've had a, I've had a full life. I've enjoyed every minute of it. Not every minute, but you know, for the most part.

RW-N: What have been some of the harder times in your life?

OC: My hardest time's this past 3 years since my husband died and I had to take over this business. This has been the hardest time of my life, but it hasn't gotten me down, you know.

AB: What supports you? What keeps you going?

OC: My faith, I think. I don't and when I go to bed at night, I sleep. I don't toss, I don't turn or, you know. So I just keep going. My attorney tells me, he says, "Mrs. Chatman, I admire your courage." But he thinks that a woman my age just has no business doing what I'm trying to do. I said, "Well, I'm still making it." But uh, anyway, I, I'm doing alright.

RW-N: Now you intend to keep running the funeral home, at least that's what you're doing right now?

OC: For a while, for a while, right now. I'm not -- I, I sometimes I think well, maybe I'm going to sell this place and move back to Aracoma and, you know, live quietly, and but then again, I don't know. The young man who works for me worked for David for so long and he just, he'd give his right arm for this place and he just, you know, "Mrs. Chatman, you don't want to do

that.” You know, so we just hang on.

AB: Do you think you could live a quiet life?

OC: No, [chuckles] because I, I’m sometimes I go out every evening to some sort of a meeting or something. Like Tuesday I had an Eastern Star meeting. Tuesday -- Wednesday I had Bible study. Thursday I had choir rehearsal. And Friday. . .

RW-N: Wait a minute, you had choir rehearsal?

OC: Mmm-hmm.

RW-N: You’re singing in. . .

OC: I play for my choir.

RW-N: You play. . .

OC: I play for my choir. And I want to quit so badly and they said, “Now don’t, don’t quit.” I said, “But, but I’m getting to the place that I don’t see that well and I miss notes.” And they say, “That’s why we want to keep you cause we don’t sing that well.” [laughter] So anyway, there’s something for me to do all the time, all the time so... I, I, I don’t really have the time to stay at home and clean my house like I should, [chuckles] but. . .

RW-N: So hardly a day goes by that you don’t, well, 1st of all you have contact because of the business, right?

OC: Right, right.

RW-N: You have contact with people every day.

OC: Right, right, that’s part of it. Then there’s . . .

RW-N: And often in the evenings?

OC: There was a lady in today. We, in fact, she came to pay on an account. We sat there and

talked and talked and talked and talked. That's why the door was still open. She hadn't been long gone. So uh, I'm in contact with people and I'm never lonesome.

AB: Uh, have you always been a person who liked, you seem to like people?

OC: I do.

AB: Have you always been like that or is that learned behavior?

OC: I've always, no, I've always liked people. I've always been, been fond of being around people. (AB: Mmm-hmm) I don't like to be by myself, you know, like that. (AB: Mmm-hmm) I liked ... And at one time I liked to entertain, you know, things like that. Christmas, I'd want the club to meet with me Christmas because I could have the tree and, you know, exchange the gifts and so forth. But, I, I just -- What is it? You can be, you can be lonely, but not lonesome? -- So I, I was at first when, when David passed, I was lost but I soon, you know, just got a hold of myself, went on.

AB: You said earlier when we were talking about changing things, you said there might have been material things that you might have had or would like to have. What are some of those things?

OC: I, I don't know. [chuckles] What is it? You can't miss what you've never had? But I really don't know. You know, I've, I've, I've, I've never had worlds of things, you know. I've always been a poor person uh, uh or, well, a person with a moderate income, but uh, I don't think there's really anything that, that I've actually wanted and, and didn't get, you know, because why would I want a home in England when, you know, I've never had anything like, like that. I just, I don't, maybe that was a bad statement [chuckles] now that I think about it.

AB: You were talking about teaching, uh, we were earlier. As you think back on your teaching career, what kind of teacher do you think you were?

OC: I think I was a pretty good teacher. I, I really do and I tell you why when, when you run into a parent or a former student and they say, "Well, I will never forget this," or "I'll never forget that." A parent, a parent told me, she said, "Do you know, since," she said, "Terry Jane was, was your student," she said, "She wouldn't dare leave home with the hem coming out of her dress or she wouldn't dare leave home with dirty sneakers or, or. . ." And uh you see, I, I met a little girl in town and she said, "Mrs. Chatman, I don't expect you to remember my name, but I remember you. And uh, I'm so glad you taught me." She said, "You can't hardly remember all these people (AB: Mmm hmm) with whom you've come in contact." She said, "But I really appreciate you." And there's a young man who lives across the street, rents from me now, and he says, "Mrs. Chatman, you were my teacher, do you remember me?" And I said, "No, I really don't." [inaudible words] [chuckles] But when people, you know, RW-N: Mmm mmm.) tell you, that, that they appreciate you and, and I had one parent, young man to come and he had his little child in his arms and he brought her and put her in my lap, say, "Here, you can have this one." [laughter] You know, and that just really makes you feel, feel good.

AB: Are there any teachers that you had that you remember in the same way?

OC: Yes, there are some. There are. . .

AB: From Montgomery?

OC: From Montgomery, well, most of my high school teachers were in Montgomery. Well, from 10th, 11th, and 12th. And of course, 7th, 8th, and 9th were in London, but I remem -- I remember a grade school teacher, a Mrs. Julia Hopkins, and uh, my mother was ill for a long time and, and uh, at that time you didn't have people, you know, nurses and so forth. And I was out of school for 3 months helping my mother as she continued, you know, to get well. And this

teacher would come to the house, not, not being paid as a, as a teacher for homebound students, but she would come and keep me abreast. I was, I was in the 6th or 7th grade, keep me abreast of what was going on and then at the end of that year, that lady came and gave me a final test, (AB: Mmm-hmm) Ms. Julia Hopkins, I will never forget her. And she, she lived to be maybe 80 or 90. She lived, in fact, in fact, David and I were married when she passed in Mountain State Nursing Home in Charleston and uh I just -- I loved her because she cared. I can see her now. She carried everything in a shopping bag, this bag and her, I never knew what she had in that bag, but, but she lived uh, she lived in a little place called Morris Creek. Now it's called Morris Drive, but uh,uh she was harsh. She was hard on you. (RW-N: Ooh, is that the other one?) But she was, she was, she -- I will never forget her, because my high . . .

RW-N: Hold on.

END OF TAPE 2 - SIDE 1

BEGINNING OF TAPE 2 - SIDE 2

AB: . . . what year?

OC: Well, Jean was killed in an accident last, about 2 months ago.

AB: Really?

OC: Mmm-hmm, yes,(AB: Oh.) she -- it left a void in this county that, that uh. . . Yeah, she was kin, she was related to Bob Harris, uh, her mother and Bob Harris were sisters and brothers. He taught at Simmons and he was from Huntington, Douglass High School.

AB: That's right cause this was, Miss, Miss Brown was a Harris before she married. She was Mae Harris.

OC: Right, right, right, okay.

AB: And this was her niece, I guess, who used to come (OC: Right, right) to Huntington and I remember her playing. (OC: Jean played...) She played a wonderful gospel piano.

OC: Beautifully. She was one of the directors with this group that went to Hampton at every year. But she was killed coming from Hilltop about a month or 2 ago, (AB: Mmm.) killed instantly. (AB: Mmm.) As she left Hilltop, a car ran into her car, killed her instantly. It was, it was, well, it was all, the place was so packed nobody could get near the church when she. . . (AB: Mmm hmm.) just about, maybe 2 months. (AB: Hmm.)

AB: You were telling us about Miss Hopkins who was. . .

OC: Miss Julia Hopkins, Julia Hopkins, and she was, she was just good. Anybody who would take the time knowing that. . . uh, I, I would have mi -- I would have lost a year in school because of 3 months, my mother had uh, uh, what they called a fistula of some type of a, of a boil and uh, I remember she was in Charleston General Hospital for a while, but when she came home the place had to be tended every day, every day. And she, uh, couldn't, couldn't do any work, couldn't do anything and I was a 7th, 7th or 8th grader. I had to stay at home (AB: Mmm-hmm) and, and help, (AB: Mmm hmm.) so Mrs. Hopkins was kind enough. She taught at this little school, Union, right outside of Montgomery, and, and she would come down and give me my assignments and maybe not every day, but she'd give me enough work to do so that when she came back again I would have done that and she'd give me another assignment. And at the end of the year, she, she gave me the, uh -- it was a sort of standardized test I imagine, and I'd take the test and I went on to the next grade.

AB: Was that something that she was required to do or. . . ?

OC: No, I, I really think she did that on her own, I really do.

AB: Some of the people that we have talked with have suggested that that sort of attitude of caring that you described was something that many black teachers showed for their students (OC: Right) and that that was lost after integration.

OC: That was lost. Now I think that was lost in integration because home life for, for, for some of the black students was different than that of white students.

AB: What do you mean?

OC: I'm thinking that maybe white students fared better in their homes. For example, a, a parent would bring a child to me and say, "Now, you take her, take her to mercantile and get her what she needs and I'll, I'll, I'll pay. I don't know what, I don't know what to get for her. You, you take her and you do this." We used to have what they called group guidance and we would teach a young man how to ask a lady for a dance. You don't go over and grab the girl by the arm and pull her across the floor and start dancing with her with your hat on, you know. (AB: Mmm-hmm) We taught kids things like that that they did not get.

AB: You did that during the school day?

OC: We did that, well, we'd set aside say from 10 to 10:30 was group guidance. (AB: Mm hmm.) And we would talk about things like that or the lady from the drug store would come over and talk about grooming and such things that, that we didn't do, we didn't do in. . . in the integrated school, we just, we went at 9 o'clock and taught, you know, through to the end of the day. Now, now that, that caring part I think was missing. I, I really do and maybe it was because there are fewer blacks in the schools than, than of course, in the, in the segregated schools, of course, it was all black. (AB: Mmm hmm.)

AB: Do you think that might have had anything to do with being members of the same community

too?

OC: Might have been, busing in, (AB: Mmm hmm.) you, you. . .

AB: And you might have gone to the same church or lived next door?

OC: Right, absolutely. And you know when, it used to be if a kid looked out and saw the teacher coming, it was with fear and tremor and they didn't know that that teacher was coming to their home. Or if she were coming, "What's she coming here for? What did I do?" Because they knew if they had been punished in school, they were going to get it again when that teacher left. But that, that, that's not there anymore and, and I think that, that, well, I don't go along with paddling and beating on children, but I, I think maybe parents have, have gone a little overboard in some instances.

AB: We, Rita and I were talking about education and uh, it was my feeling that there was a generation of black parents that was very interested in their children's being educated. Did -- has that has that been your experience?

OC: Right, right, right.

AB: And how do you think it is now? Do you it has changed?

OC: Well, you've got a, you've got a different generation now. A lot, a lot of young, uh, single parents, uh, not, not as interested in their children as, as they were when I came along.

AB: What do you think made that other group, the older generation more interested in education?

OC: I think maybe it was because they didn't have any and they wanted, they wanted, wanted something better, or what they considered better for their children. If they didn't have an education, they wanted to see their child get one.

RW-N: And they saw that as a way to make your life better?

OC: Make your life better. They did, they really did, mmm-hmm.

RW-N: And you think some of that's been lost now?

OC: I think some of it's been lost.

AB: And, and the teachers have changed too?

OC: Yes.

AB: So it's not just the children or the parents, (OC: The teachers...) but education?

OC: Right, it has changed.

AB: Makes it tough to be a young person.

OC: It does, it really does. And, and kids nowadays are exposed to so many things that we weren't exposed. . . [phone rings, tape stopped]

AB: . . . about some of the things that young people were exposed to now.

OC: Oh, yes, drugs, alcohol and . . .

AB: But alcohol has always been . . .

OC: Well, that's true. It's always been around.

AB: It's been there.

RW-N: And there have often been a lot of single mothers too.

OC: Uh, uh, well -- drugs, of course, I was thinking of. Well, they have more television. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) They have more freedom to. . . When, when we went home from school, we did our homework or we ate our dinner, we washed the dishes and that was it, if we didn't play checkers or, or whatever or maybe go to a football game and a little social after the game, that was, that was the extent of it. But now they go snow, what is it? Skateboarding and they go, uh they go to soccer practice, they go, they just have so many more things to do. They don't hardly

have time to sit and eat as a family. Have you ever, and do you ever hear of kids, families sitting around the table eating? They grab a sandwich and they're gone. Parents are going this way, they're going that way and so nobody has time for each other. I think that has a lot to do with it.

Maybe I'm off the track. [chuckles]

AB: Uh, you uh have spent your teaching life as a physical education teacher.

OC: Most of it.

AB: Did that carry over into activities beyond your teaching? I mean, were you a bicycle rider, we were talking about skateboarding, or anything like that?

OC: No, I wasn't a bicycle rider; Uh, oh, in fact, I wasn't active in, physically in any sport or anything.

AB: You seem so agile and move about so quickly and whatnot now, I just wondered if your physical education training had carried over into your life.

OC: It didn't carry over. I don't -- the only thing about it, I've just tried to stay healthy. (AB: Mmm-hmm) You know, well. . .

AB: You don't exercise or . . .

OC: Not a lot.

AB: . . . lift weights? [laughter]

OC: No, I don't lift weights. Up and down the steps maybe 20 or 30 times a day. I have thought of getting, I said, "Well, at my age, maybe I need a chair lift to get up. . ." (AB: Mmm-hmm) Then someone said, "Well, what do you need one for the way you bounce up and down the stairs." That may be your method of staying supple and, you know, active but. . .

RW-N: But you've probably always been active, even though not physically engaged?

OC: I have always, I've always been, and of course, maybe my years of teaching physical education has sort of kept me (RW-N: Yes) in some type or form. Now I've had my sick, sick days. I was in the hospital, uh, in '82 for one month, from July 4th to July 28th. They were looking for cancer that that they never found. So other than that, I've never been ill or anything, (AB: Mmm-hmm.) but the doctor said I was exhibiting all of the, the signs (AB: Mmm-hmm.) of, although they never could find it, but uh. . .

AB: It's nice to have them proved wrong, isn't it? [chuckles]

OC: Right, right, right, but he said [inaudible], he says, "I, you're just a strange case." He said, "Because we, we've given you every kind of test imaginable and, and we don't, uh, we don't find anything." So he sent me home. But, now that was in '82 so if, if I had it then, it certainly would have shown its ugly face by now.

AB: In these last years, right?

RW-N: Mrs. Chatman, I asked you before what was the hardest part of your life and you said the last few years have been tough years. As you look back on your life, do you remember an especially good time in your life?

OC: [chuckles] No, I hadn't thought about that. Let's see, any good time. . .

RW-N: An especially good time.

OC: Well, my marriage to David was an especially good time, our marriage. Uh. That's about, that's about it. I, I'm, and I'm enjoying, I, I, I'm, I'm alone now, but I'm still, I'm enjoying my life. This is still a good time. (RW-N: Mmm-hmm) It's well, it's good to be alive, like you said, to get up in the morning. And I remember my minister was bragging on me and said, "Oh, this woman is 80-some years old. She gets up in the morning, she dresses herself, she fixes her

breakfast, she gets in her car, and drives to church.” [chuckles] And I said, “Well, that is an accomplishment.” [laughter] So. . .

RW-N: Let me ask you about that. What, what are the things about yourself that you have, that you appreciate? You said your students, um, have sometimes, and students’ parents have, have remarked that they have appreciated you. What are the -- what are your characteristics that you’re happy about, that you’re satisfied about. (OC: Oh) Your own characteristics, I’m going to ask you for the bad ones, too, so. . . [chuckles]

OC: I don’t know. I, I like people. I -- that, uh, my abil -- my ability to get along with people, I, I think.

RW-N: You treasure that?

OC: I treasure that. (RW-N: Uh-huh, uh-huh) Sometimes I, I speak without thinking and of course, I say at my age I tell them, “Well, I’m allowed to say whatever.” (RW-N: You can get away with it.) I can get away with it, but uh, I think my ability to, to get along with people and, and they, uh, my friend, Vivian Thompson says, “Well, Chatman, you know you’ve got psychology for everybody you know. You can get along with the principal when we can’t.” I said, “Well, you gotta know how to (RW-N: Uh-huh), how to talk to people.” So. . .

RW-N: What other kinds of characteristics do you see in yourself? One is obviously you have good social skills and getting along and understanding. If you had to do, just say, name 3 or 4 things that would describe yourself, good or bad, what might they be?

OC: Well, I think I’m well-groomed when I leave my house. (RW-N: Uh-huh) I like, I like to be, I don’t say well-dressed, but I like to be, look like I’m in 1 piece. You know, I like to be. . .

AB: Is that something you inherited from your mother?

OC: I think I did. I think so.

AB: See a picture of her with that hat on . . .

OC: She has that knack of, of knowing, you know, how to look. I, I will never live up to her, but I like to, I like to put things together and be, you know, look fairly decent. (AB: Mmm-hmm) Uh other than that, I can't think of any possible. I like -- I'd like a cleaner house. [chuckles]

AB: We all would.

RW-N: So if you could change one thing right now, you'd have a cleaner house.

OC: Yes, yes. Well, I was supposed to have some people in here to clean for me, but they've gone to Washington, D.C. and they're not back yet. So maybe I'll get them by Christmas. [chuckles]

RW-N: I should note for the sake of the tape that Mrs. Chatman's home looks neat and clean.

AB: Yes, it does.

RW-N: She just has high. . .

OC: On the surface.

RW-N: . . . high expectations.

OC: On the surface, on the surface [chuckles]

AB: Uh, at the funeral home, do you handle only black business or do you ever handle white business as well?

OC: We, uh, since I've managed the business, uh, we have not had 1 white person, but we did have, uh, we've had, oh about 2 months ago we buried a black man who was married to a white woman and we've done that several times. And we did bury a white man during David's lifetime. (AB: Mmm-hmm) -- several, because some family called in here from out of state and David even

told them that this is a black funeral home and they said it didn't matter. They wanted the body picked up and carried to a certain cemetery for burial. (AB: Mmm-hmm) So we have done it and we're, we're equipped to do it and so. . .

AB: Has uh, uh integration cut into your business any?

OC: No.

AB: Because in Huntington and in Charleston now white funeral homes are handling black business when they didn't used to do that.

OC: Well, it hasn't, it hasn't, it hasn't so far, (AB: Mmm-hmm) so far.

RW-N: I don't know if we have asked you this before and we may have so stop me if we have. Um many of the women tell us about their family being mixed in some way, racially. They go back to their grand – their grandmothers, whatever. Do you know of any of that in your family with regard to white mixture or perhaps American Indian?

OC: Now I don't know of any, any mixture except for my great-grandmother. They claim that she has Indian, is of Indian descent.

RW-N: Your great-grandmother on. . .

OC: My great-grandmother.

RW-N: On your mother's side?

OC: On my father's side.

RW-N: On your father's side. (OC: Mmm-hmm) Have we talked about that? Am I repeating this?

OC: No.

RW-N: I don't recall . . .

OC: You didn't ask me that.

AB: No, I don't think so.

RW-N: So there's always been um an oral tradition in your family that (OC: That I was told.) described that.

RW-N: Uh huh.

OC: Other than that, I don't know of any other reference.

RW-N: And your father came from North Carolina, right?

OC: My father came from Mississippi.

RW-N: And the family was from. . .

AB: From Virginia.

OC: The family's in Virginia.

RW-N: Yes, sorry, yes.

AB: We were talking about Miss Hopkins, your teacher. Was there anybody else that influenced you in quite -- at all?

OC: Well, yes, in, in senior high school, I was influenced by, uh, my English teacher. And a lot of the people now say, "Oh, yes, Chatman, you and that English. You want it spelled correctly." [chuckles] I, I have a fetish about printed material, you know, and the word misspelled. But Bertha Johnson Washington, she was my English teacher in, in, uh, Montgomery and I thought she was tops. She was very good.

RW-N: Mmm-hmm. Now how old were you when she was your teacher? What grade was this?

OC: I was at -- I was 10th, 11th, and 12th.

RW-N: There, okay.

OC: About 14, 15, 16.

RW-N: And what was there about her that especially attracted you?

OC: She was just, she was good.

RW-N: A good teacher?

OC: She was a good teacher. She was thorough and she was also a uh dramatics teacher. I liked it because we had plays and things like that so I just thought she was. . . And, and it's funny, uh, later after I became a teacher, we became friends, you know, we went around together. And, and another thing I liked about her, she took me to Institute for the 1st time. I had never been to Institute, to West Virginia State College. She was going to a spring formal and she, she, she took, uh, another girl and me to Institute so we could see the campus and go to an Omega Psi Phi fraternity dance. We sat there and, you know, uh, wide-eyed and enjoyed it. [chuckles] But uh, uh, she exposed us, you know, to some very nice things.

AB: Do you think that that encouraged you to go to college, that visit?

OC: That could have been, been one of the factors (AB: Mmm-hmm), you know, in my wanting to, to go to college. And well, yes, it was because she and the, the physical education teacher at State were, had been roommates in college, Muriel Fawcett. And uh, that was probably the reason, as I think about it.

RW-N: Did you get much encouragement from your mother to go to college?

OC: Oh, yes. She wanted me to go to college, yes indeed, much, much encouragement from her and my stepfather.

AB: Why?

OC: Maybe because they didn't have one, have an education, (AB: Mmm-hmm) could have been.

But they encouraged me.

AB: Did going to college in any way separate you from the community? You know, sometimes people, when they go to college and then they go back home, and home is never the same as it was before.

OC: Not really because most of us, I think, went somewhere. I remember Fred and I were down there at the same time, Fred Chiles, (AB: Mmm-hmm) Leon Saunders, uh, oh, then 2 friends went to New York. They went their various ways. I don't think there was much, much difference, separation.

AB: Your mother was never intimidated by your learning?

OC: No, no, no. She was, she was proud, you know, she'd, uh, "Well, you didn't go, did you go over to speak to Miss so and so? Did you go over to speak to this one?" You know, whenever you went home, you had to visit the neighbors, you had to speak to this one and that one. And even, even after I came here to teach and I'd go home, you know, for weekend visits, I had to go to speak to certain people, you know, people in the neighborhood.

RW-N: Were you impatient about that?

OC: Not really, not really.

AB: Uh the decisions that you've made over your life, are you satisfied with the decisions that you've made?

OC: I am, I am.

AB: Anything you wish you could undo?

OC: No, [chuckles] not hardly. No, I, I'm satisfied, I'm satisfied. I, I may have been able to do better, but, but like I said before, you don't miss what you never had so I, I feel satisfied.

RW-N: But you know, some people do. They, they live long lives and they feel sort of cheated, cheated at the end.

OC: They feel cheated. . . Well, I don't feel cheated. (RW-N: You don't.) I really don't. I'm content. It doesn't take a lot to make me happy, you know. [chuckles] I just, just, as they say, just go with the flow. I don't, I don't expect a lot and, and, and I've, I've, as I said, I've led a good life.

AB: In your marriages, did you ever feel that you were being moved by your husbands into a direction that you didn't want to go? I mean, uh, whether it was whether you would spend money or go on a trip or wear something that you didn't like that they liked or so. Was (OC: No.) their will ever imposed on you in that way?

OC: No, no. Now, uh, uh -- the 2 men were as different as night and day. Uh, if, if I put on something that was new or different, Dr. Elliot would notice it. But if I put on whatever -- David would never notice it. [chuckles] And if he did, I would, you know, "Well, what do I have on that he likes?" you know. Uh, they were, they were quite, quite different. If, if, I -- do you remember seams in ladies hose?

AB: Oh, yes, sure.

RW-N: Yeah.

OC: Well, Dr. Elliot would say, "Young lady, I think maybe those seams, those cords running up and down there are a little crooked" or something like that. He was that observant. Well, he was a medical doctor. He would, he would notice everything. But now David wouldn't say anything or, now if he didn't like something, he would say, "Are you gonna wear that?" [chuckles] Have you ever heard that before? [laughter] "Are you gonna wear that?" I remember I was getting

ready for a wedding; my godchild was getting married and the storekeeper and I were just trying so hard to get the perfect dress for a godmother, you know, to wear at the wedding. And we thought we had come upon the nicest thing and do you know I put that dress on and he said, "Are you going to wear that?" I had paid close to 200 dollars for the dress. You know I never wore it? I never wore it. I found something else to put on and we'd go to a family reunion or a banquet, I'd say, "David, which one is it you like?" "You gonna wear that?" There was something he -- about the dress -- he did not like and I eventually gave it away, but uh, that's the only time he ever showed any dislike for something I had. He didn't care. In fact, in fact at Christmastime, he would go to the store where I shopped most, and the ladies would lay out 5 or 6 different outfits that they had and he would select the ones that he liked, so he'd give them to me for Christmas. So that's one way he didn't have to say, "You gonna wear that?" [chuckles] But uh, no, it that, we, we -- that's why I say we got along so well. He'd, he'd, he'd say, "You wanna go on this cruise or would you like to do this, would you like to do that?" And I'd say, "Yeah." You know, now this last trip we took, I, I, I was sort of opposed to it because he didn't feel well and I said to him, "We don't have to go this time." And then he said, "Oh yeah, I wanna go." So you know, we went, but usually we were together on, on anything like that. Homecoming, we never missed homecoming at West Virginia State.

(AB: Mmm-hmm) Every, every year. So uh -- and we never missed going to a game at Ohio State until their games became so popular on TV. We would select a game. We would go for the weekend. We'd leave on Friday and come back Sunday. That would be our weekend away in the fall just to see 1 Ohio State football game. So we just liked the same things.

AB: How did you manage money decisions? Were there any, any differences in opinion on how

you (OC: No.) handled family finances?

OC: No, no. Hmm-mmm, no differences. He took care of everything and, uh, whatever -- I usually spent most of my money for groceries and whatever else I wanted and for the utilities, things like that, he took, took care of. So many things I didn't even know he was paying for, you know. He took care of most of the finances.

RW-N: When you say "your money", you're talking about. . . ?

OC: When I said "my money" what I earned as a teacher.

RW-N: What you earned, that's what you meant. Uh-huh, so that sort of took care of buying for the kitchen and . . .

OC: And then maybe if I saw a beautiful bedspread or if I saw curtains or things like that, I'd just, I would go on and get it.

AB: You didn't have to consult with him if you wanted something like that?

OC: No, I didn't and, and a lot of times we'd go together. Most of the times when I, when I bought things like that I was alone, seldom we went together shopping, seldom. Now if it was big item like furniture or something like that, I, uh, we would go together.

AB: Were there ever any family discussions on what you felt you needed to do? For example, for your mother, if you wanted to send her money or anything like that?

OC: No, he didn't, it didn't bother -- in fact, in her last days she lived with us. (AB: Mmm-hmm) When she was very ill the, the doctor said she couldn't live alone and that, I had been trying to get her here and she just fought me all the way, you know, to stay in her own home. And I said she wasn't able to do it and I called him ^{and told him} what the doctor had said and he said, "Well, just get an ambulance and bring her here." And he had fixed the room across the hall beautifully and had

gotten a lady who came in every morning to see after her until we came in from school so there was never any uh any argument.

RW-N: Now have you lived in this home for several years did you say?

OC: I've been here since '63, 1963.

AB: That's when you were married? You came right here when you married David?

OC: When, when I, when I, I married, we married in '62. You know, I stayed in Aracoma for 1 year. (AB: Mmm-hmm) Well then his partner died. (AB: Mmm-hmm) His partner lived here (AB: Mmm-hmm) on this side and he and his grandmother lived on the other side. See there's another apartment over there. (RW-N: Yes) So when his partner died, naturally he had to come up here (AB: Mmm-hmm) and live cause his grandmother was elderly and everything (AB: Mmm-hmm) (RW-N: Yes.) so I came up here in '63.

RW-N: Mrs. Chatman, is there anything that, that you would like to talk about that hasn't come up yet or that we haven't asked you about?

OC: I don't know of anything you haven't covered. [chuckles] I told them you all were the best interviewers I'd ever seen. No, I can't, I can't think of anything. You, you, you seem to think of everything so I can't, I can't think of anything.

AB: I would like to have this picture of you is in. . . your...

OC: That's in my Eastern Star garb.

AB: Would you describe that?

OC: Okay, this, this, this indicates this, this stole indicates the highest office a woman can have in the Order of Eastern Star. That's what you call Grand Worthy Matron. I had that office from '63 to '67. (AB: Mmm-hmm.) And that, that's what we wore.

AB: Did you have to travel as a part of that? Did you visit other (OC: I did...) chapters?

OC: ...but not too many, not too many, but, but I was to visit; in fact, I visited every chapter in the state, (AB: Mmm-hmm.) and then if you were invited out of the state. I went to Boston, I went to New York, I went to Washington, I went to Denver. Uh, not as many places as the people are doing now because they go somewhere else. Like every time you turn around, they're going somewhere. So uh, that's what this represents.

AB: Very nice, very nice.

OC: That's when I was a little fatter. [chuckles] That was, that was taken around, I guess, maybe '68, '69.

AB: Now let's see what organizations you belong to -- the Eastern Star, the Delta s, and the Federated Clubs (OC: Federated Clubs), what else? (OC: Uh.) You play for your church ...

OC: I play for my church, (AB: Choir) mmm-hmm, and uh, oh, I'm Vice-President of the Music Convention, what they call First Vice-President.

AB: Is that down at -- meets where?

OC: That, that well, the local meets in the county (AB: Mmm-hmm) and every, at a certain date, I, and I don't belong to the state. Once a year the state convention meets. (AB: Mmm-hmm) But this, this is the local convention, what they call Guyan Valley Convention.

RW-N: Now what is this for?

OC: Music, music.

AB: There was 1 in Fayette County.

OC: Right, Fayette County [overlapping voices].

AB: They had their building there in at Harlem Heights I think it is.

OC: Is that right?

AB: Mmm-hmm, I was thinking convention. . .

OC: They had a building here, but I think, it's torn down now. I know it is.

AB: I think they met on the 5th Sunday.

OC: Every -- everyone does. (AB: Mmm-hmm) We meet on the 5th Sunday. (AB: Mmm-hmm) That's why we're getting ready to. . .

AB: This is for people who love to sing.

OC: Yeah, that's right. (AB: They come together. . .) They come together every 5th Sunday and that's what we're getting ready for now, (AB: Mmm-hmm) for the 5th Sunday in this month.

AB: And they sing, of course it's a church so they sing, uh, (OC: Churches, right.) They don't sing secular music. So your singing convention -- anything else that you're a member of that...?

OC: That's all I know. Isn't that enough? [chuckles]

AB: What about card parties or anything like that? (OC: No) I remember you said your parents were-- used to like to play cards.

OC: Now we used to play a lot of cards. I had some friends here, they were white friends and we loved, they loved to play cards. We'd play after every basketball game, every football game, and any other time we could, but uh his wife died. He was director of mental health in the district, Dr. Church. I don't know if you've ever heard of him. And his wife taught at the college. Oh, we loved to play cards.

AB: What did you play?

OC: We played poker. We played, uh, bridge, that was, that was the main thing.

AB: Do you have any whist players around?

OC: No, we don't. We used to play whist, used to play bid-bid whist. Bid whist, used to play.

RW-N: Did you say "bit" whist?

OC: Bid.

AB: B-i-d.

OC: B-i-d, and then there was another game I, not canasta but uh, I haven't played cards since she died. Well, anyway, she died and he has since re-married and they have moved way out in the country. He's retired so I don't get to see them. In fact, I haven't played cards or anything since.

AB: Did you play when you were in college?

OC: All the time, all the time. [chuckles] Yeah, we played when we were in college. So, Miss Russell was my matron and Georgia Peters, I don't know if you remember. See, you're a young woman. Georgia Peters was my matron at Hill Hall, at, uh, MacCorkle Hall.

AB: Now, Miss Russell was the dean of women when I was in school.

OC: Miss Russell, she was Miss Bullock when I came. She became divorced, I guess, there. She was my matron at, at Dawson Hall. I lived on, in the corner room at Dawson.

AB: You know they've redone Dawson Hall.

OC: That's what I've been told. Then I moved, then I was in Hill Hall with Mrs. Brock.

(AB: Mmm-hmm) So you know I know West Virginia State. [chuckles]

AB: Right.

OC: President Davis and President Wallace. (AB: Mmm-hmm)

RW-N: Well, are we alright? If there's nothing else, we'll end the interview.

OC: Well, there's, this has really been good

END OF INTERVIEWS

OBITUARY



David Lee Chatman, 66 of 716 Riverview Avenue, Logan, WV was born August 22, 1930 in Sharples, West Virginia to the late Lola & David Chatman. He departed this life on Saturday, December 7, 1996 in Logan General Hospital.

He was married to the former Ottrus Elliott on August 22, 1966. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his grandmother, Mrs. Ora B. Stinnett.

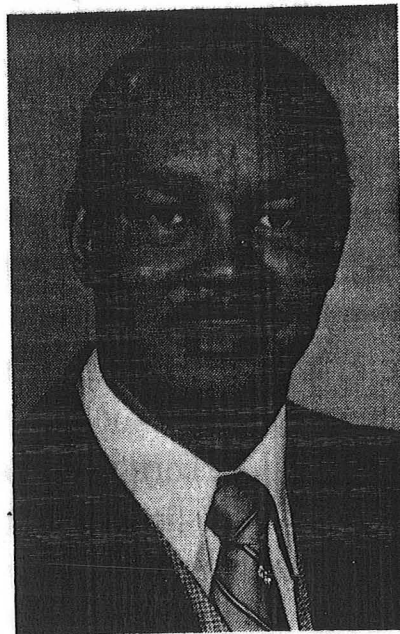
He was a graduate of Aracoma High School and West Virginia State College; and attended Marshall University. He was a veteran of the Korean Conflict. In 1952, he received the Regular Army Commission from the Atomic Gun Battalion and served in Germany. He was a Lieutenant in the Army Reserve.

He was a licensed funeral director for more than 35 years and owner of Chatman Funeral Home. A retired Math teacher having taught in the Logan County School System for approximately 35 years.

He was a member of Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church serving as Deacon and Trustee, and a teacher of the Adult Sunday School Class. He was president of the Aracoma High School Alumni Association, Logan Chapter; Vice President of the Guyan Valley Ministers and Deacons Union; Second Vice President of Guyan Valley Baptist Charity Music Convention. Board member of the Community College Foundation at Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College; and The New Employment for Women. Member of the following organizations and associations: ROTC, graduating as a Lieutenant; Kappa Alpha Psi and Phi Delta Kappa Fraternities; Chamber of Commerce; Logan Historical Society; Logan County Improvement League West Virginia Funeral Director's Association; The Order of The Knights of Pythagoras; Past Master, Guyan Valley Lodge #21 F & AM; Past Right Worshipful Grand Trustee; Prince Hall Mason of West Virginia; Royal Arch Mason I.M. Carper Chapter #5, Holden, WV; Knights of Templar Alpha Commandery #7, Holden, WV; Queen of Sheba #8, O.E.S.; Chairman of the Education Commission; West Virginia Retired Teacher's Association and NEA; and a Life Member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Inducted into the Oxford's, Strathmore's and Gifford's Who's Who.

Survivors include his wife, Ottrus Chatman of the home; two aunts, Gladys (John) Henderson of Dunbar, West Virginia; and Mamie Oden of Victorville, California; six cousins, Janice Gray of Victorville, California; James Oden of Columbus, Ohio; Phyllis Hare of Buffalo, New York; Antwan Davidson, Kevin Davidson, Ann Gardner all of Logan West Virginia; a host of other relatives and many friends.

Memorial Service For
David Lee Chatman
1930 - 1996



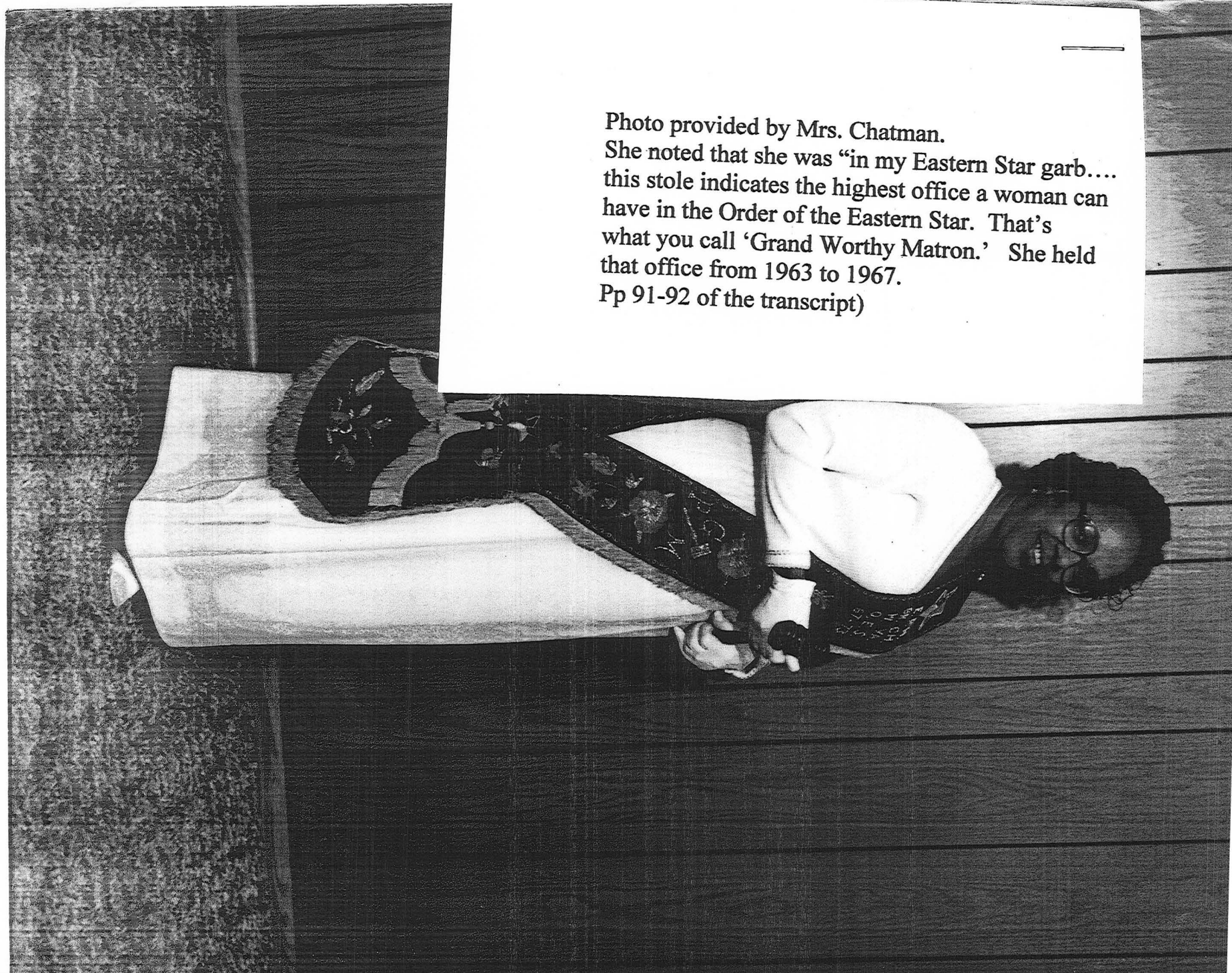
Chatman Funeral Home
Wednesday, December 11, 1996 / 1:00 pm

Officiating
Reverend James H. Mosley, Jr.

Interment
Guyan Memorial Gardens, Godby, West Virginia

Arrangements
Chatman Funeral Home
Logan, West Virginia / (304) 752-4030

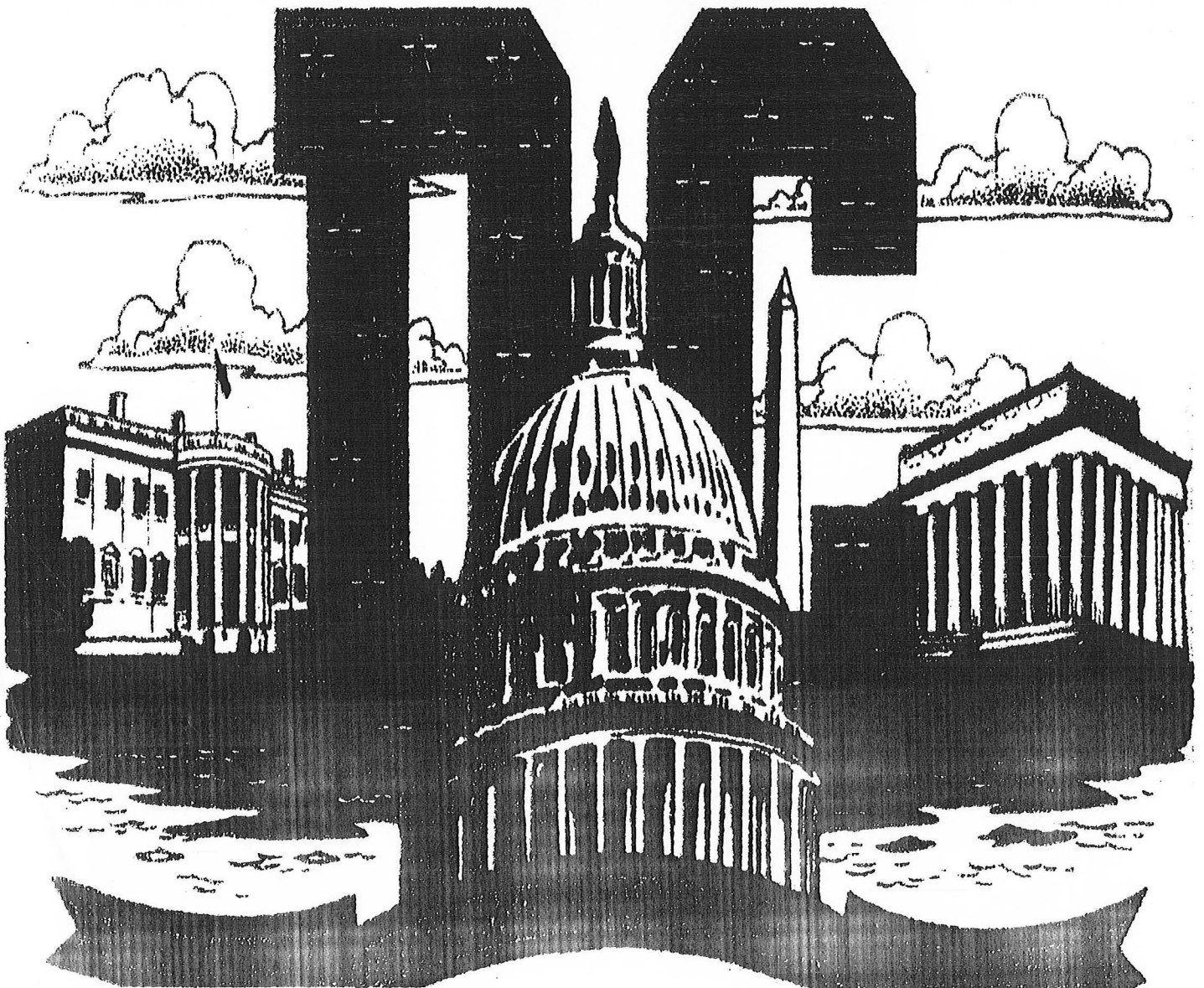
Photo provided by Mrs. Chatman.
She noted that she was "in my Eastern Star garb....
this stole indicates the highest office a woman can
have in the Order of the Eastern Star. That's
what you call 'Grand Worthy Matron.' She held
that office from 1963 to 1967.
Pp 91-92 of the transcript)



BURKE - WHEELER
FAMILY REUNION
AUGUST 5TH - 8TH, 1999
LAST SUMMER OF THE CENTURY

Mrs. Oftrus Burke Chatman

WASHINGTON



DISCLAIMER

The purpose of this booklet is to share and learn more about our family ancestry. Hopefully this booklet will encourage family members to become more involved in sharing our diverse history of milestones, careers and accomplishments.

This booklet may be revised to make changes or correct information that may contain errors. It was not the intent to omit any family members or misrepresent dates or names.

DEDICATION

We humbly and affectionately dedicated this booklet with much love and respect to our transcendent grandparents, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts.

If it had not been for their spirituality, perseverance, honesty, integrity, and love for their children then the seeds that they planted would not have yielded such a strong foundation.

As we go into a new millennium our children will carry the seed that their ancestor planted more than one hundred and fifty years ago.

We Are Blessed!!!

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 14, 1999

Warm greetings to all those gathered for the Burke/Wheeler family reunion.

Families are the vital foundation on which our nation stands. They provide the love, encouragement, and guidance we need to sustain us in all our endeavors. I applaud you for setting aside this special time to reaffirm your family ties and to express your deep affection for one another. I hope the joy of this celebration will remain with each of you in the days and months ahead.

Best wishes for a memorable reunion and for every future happiness.

Bill Clinton



ANTHONY A. WILLIAMS
MAYOR

GREETINGS

BURKE-WHEELER FAMILY REUNION

August 5 - 8, 1999

As Mayor of the District of Columbia, it is my distinct pleasure to extend greetings and a warm welcome to the Burke-Wheeler Family on the occasion of your Family Reunion.

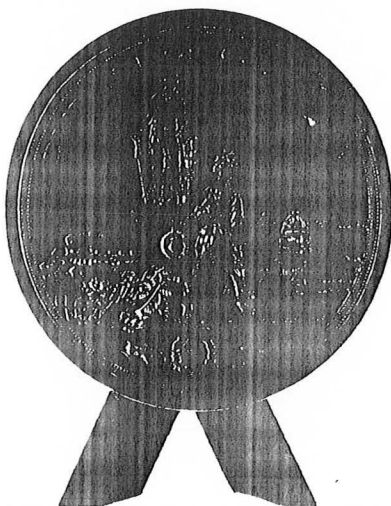
You are to be commended for your contributions and commitment to family unity. Strong family relationships help to make better communities and better citizens. During this festive reunion, you will be sharing recollections of the people, events and places that have shaped your family's record of achievement. This gathering will also provide each of you the opportunity to renew and refresh your love.

Our city is a diverse, multicultural, multiethnic city, with a long history of hospitality. For those who are visiting, I am extending an invitation for you to tour our famous historical monuments, museums, theaters, educational institutions, parks and the many residential neighborhoods -- all of which make this city unique.

On behalf of the residents of the District of Columbia, best wishes for an enjoyable and memorable reunion.

Anthony A. Williams

Anthony A. Williams
Mayor
District of Columbia



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, AUGUST 5, 1999

6:00 PM – 11:00 PM

**Registration
Family Socializing**

FRIDAY, AUGUST 6, 1999

12:00 PM – 7:00 PM

**Picnic
Six Flags America – Largo, Maryland**

SATURDAY, AUGUST 7, 1999

7:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Tour Washington, D.C.

7:00 PM – 12:00 AM

Family Banquet & Dance

SUNDAY, AUGUST 8, 1999

9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

**Breakfast, Informal Worship
& Farewell**

THE BEGINNING



RUTH ROLLINS-HENDERSON

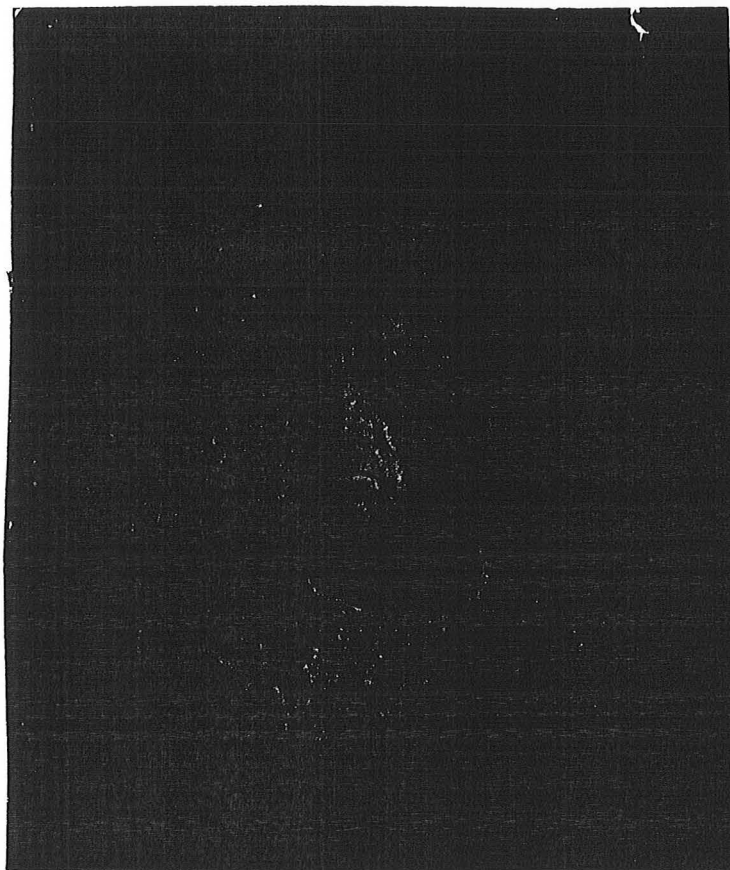
1827 – 1932

(APPROX.)

Remembred as a tiny, frail, blind lady, who looked as if a slight breeze would blow her away. She lived to be 104 years old. She was the mother of three daughter's Lucy, Matilda, and Cecilia. She died in the summer of 1931 or 1932 in Montgomery, West Virginia.

She had two sisters Clara Rollins-Woodward and Willie Rollins-Frazier who lived in Washington, D.C. Both were active in national nursing circles. Clara was instrumental in getting black nurses accepted in the Army Nurse Corps and Willie taught at Howard University.

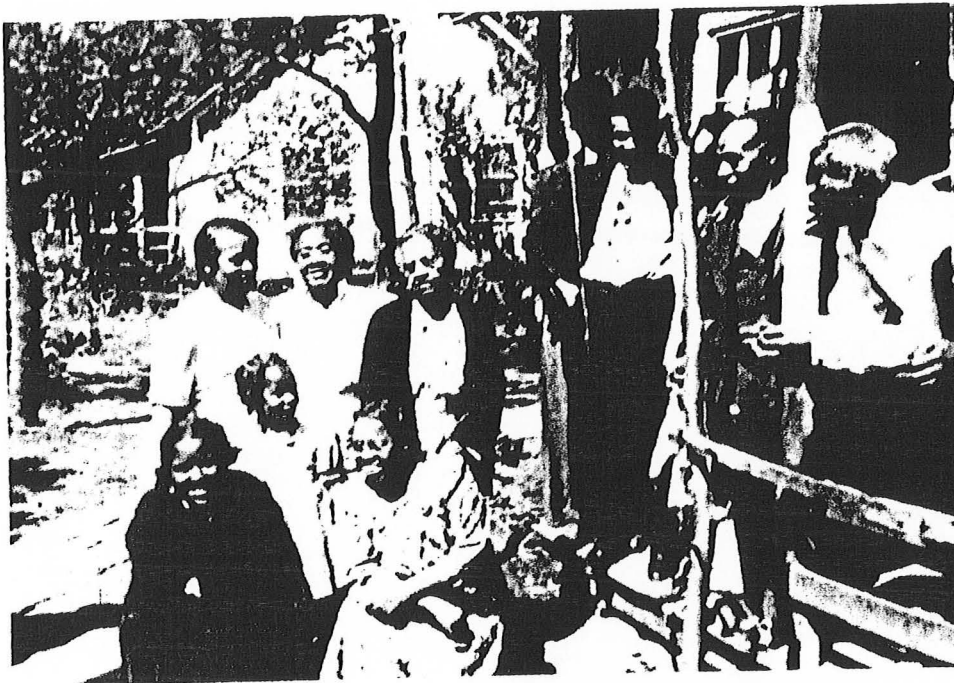
LUCY HENDERSON-HODGES



**DAUGHTER OF
RUTH ROLLINS-HENDERSON**

Remember as being slightly pixilated. She always wore mismatched hose. She and grandma Burke were very close and spent a lot of time together. They always seemed like young girls when they were together.

A FAMILY GATHERING



On the porch right to left – Daniel Wheeler; Carl Burke; Rev. James E. Burke; Alphonso Burke

Kneeling front row left to right – Gladys Johnson; Thelma Burke

Little Girl – Adelle White

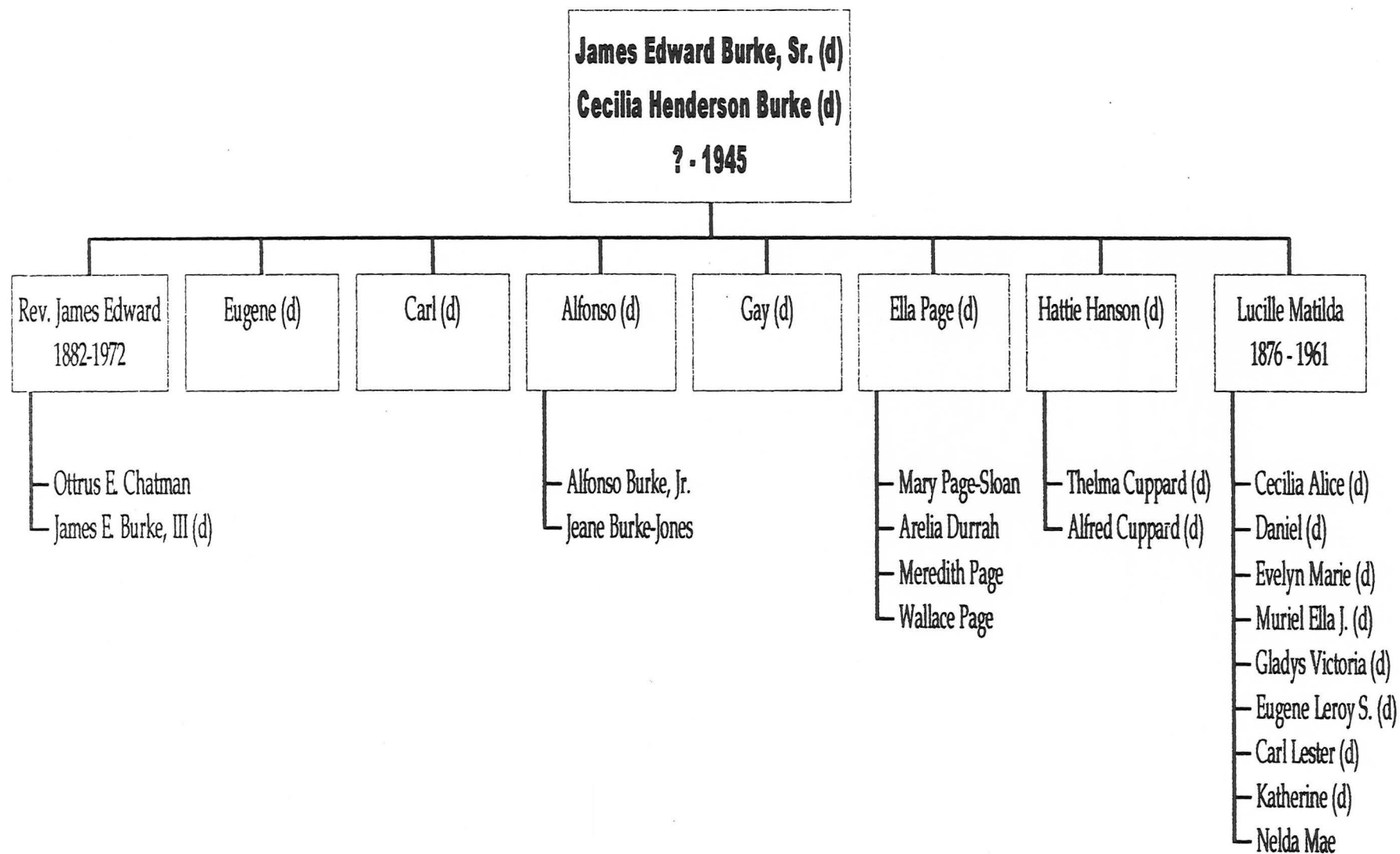
Back row left to right – Hattie Burke; Lucille Wheeler; Cecelia Henderson-Burke

Approx. Early 1940's

Cannellton, West Virginia

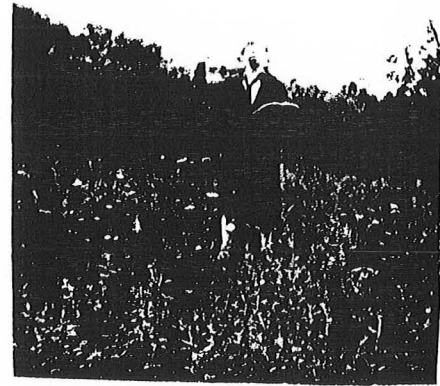
Cecelia Henderson-Burke was married to James Edward Burke Sr.
To this union eight children were borne; Rev. James Edward; Eugene; Carl; Alfonso;
Gay; Ella; Hattie; Lucy

Burke-Henderson Family Tree



CECILIA HENDERSON-BURKE

Cecilia Henderson-Burke seated in the middle was married to the late James Edward Burke, Sr. Eight children was borne into this union Rev. James Edward, Jr.; Eugene; Carl; Alfonso; Gay; Ella; Hattie; Lucille Matilida. Cecilia resided in West Virginia until her death. All siblings are deceased.



Cecilia Burke seated in the middle; left Thelma; back center James; right Hattie; far right lady in the field Gay; Bottom left Rev. James Burke, Sr.; bottom center Carl; bottom right Ella.

ALFONSO R. BURKE SR.

1900 – 1979

Alfonso R. Burke pictured
top right was the father of
two children Jeane A. Burke-
Jones pictured inset left
bottom; Alfonso Burke Jr.
"Duckie" pictured left bottom.
He later married Clara Burke
pictured right bottom.



HISTORY OF DANIEL RUBIN WHEELER & LUCILLE MATILDA BURKE

Daniel Rubin Wheeler was born in Applematic County Virginia in 1873 (month and day is unknown). He left home at an early age to help support his father, mother, brothers, and sisters. Very little history is known of his family other than his mother's name was Alice Cotton. Working odd jobs up and down the Appalachian Mountains brought Daniel Rubin to Charleston, West Virginia at the early age of fourteen. He worked as a coal miner for Cannellton Coal & Coke Company for more than fifty years and was the second oldest employee of the company.

Lucille Matilda Burke was born in Biloxi, Mississippi on August 24, 1876 to the late James Edward Burke Sr. and Cecelia Henderson – Burke. She was one of eight children, which consisted of four brothers Eugene, Carl, James, and Alfonso and three sisters Gay, Ella, Lucy and Hattie.

Daniel Rubin Wheeler and Lucille Matilda Burke were united in marriage in Charleston, West Virginia (month, day, and year are unknown). To this union nine children were borne; Cecilia Alice, (1905 – 1974); Daniel (1908 – 1964); Evelyn Marie (1909 – 1978); Muriel Ella Josephine (1910 – 1991); Gladys Victoria (1912 – 1977); Eugene Leroy S. (1915 – 1956); Carl Lester (- 1970); Katherine (1920 – 1986); and Nelda Mae is the only surviving sibling who currently resides at the Rock Creek Manor Nursing Home in Washington, D.C.

In a time when black people were often treated with antipathy Daniel Rubin and Lucille Matilda taught their children to command respect and respect others.

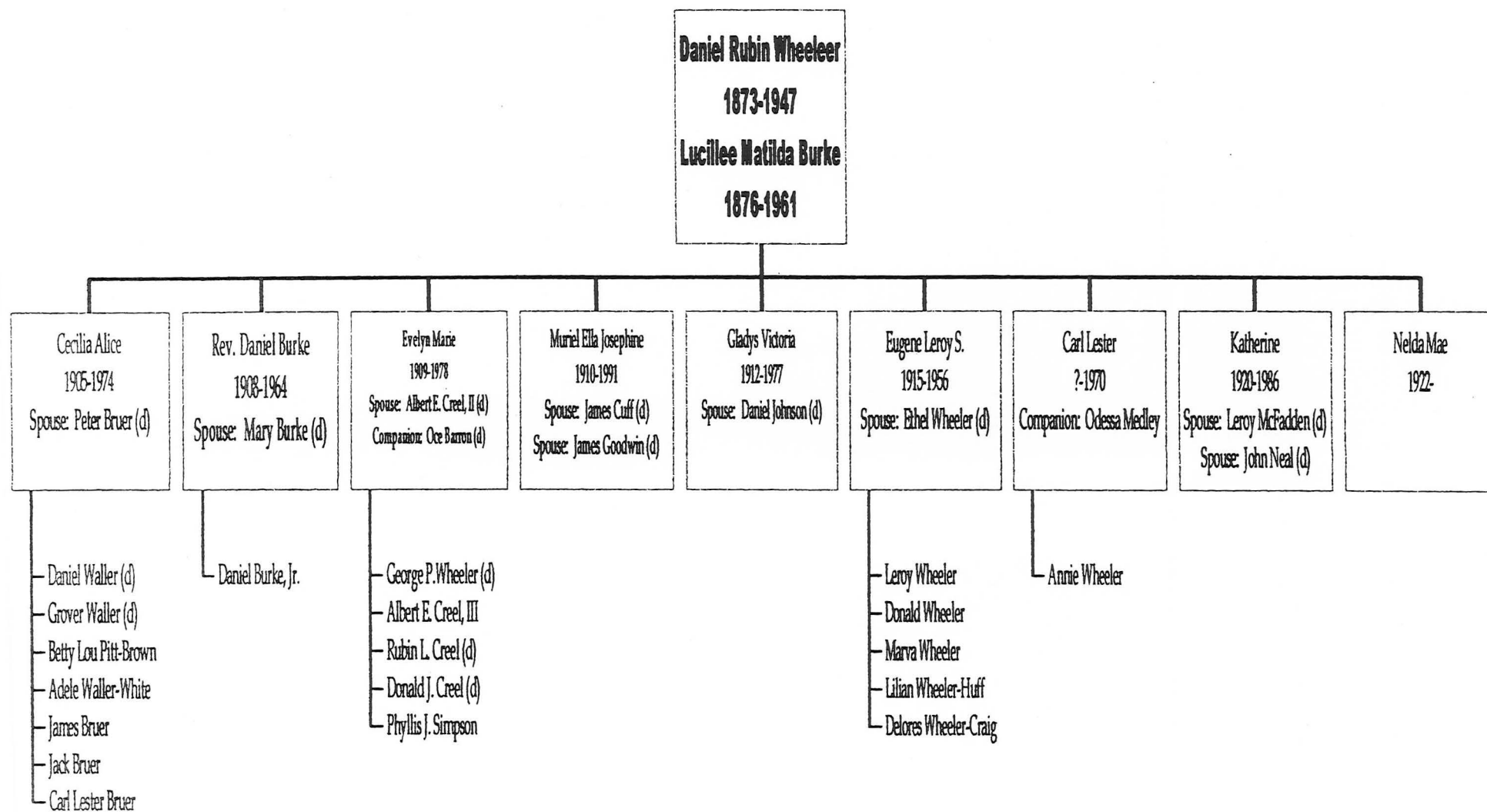
DANIEL RUBIN WHEELER
1873 – 1947



LUCILLE MATILDA BURKE
1876 - 1961



Burke-Wheeler Family Tree



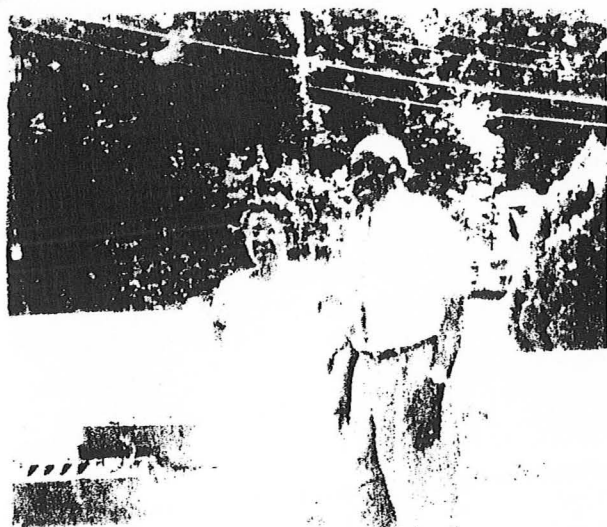
NELDA MAE WHEELER



Nelda Mae Wheeler, the youngest child of Daniel Rubin & Lucille Matilda Wheeler was born November 16, 1922 in Cannellton, West Virginia. Nelda Mae is the only surviving sibling. She never married and did not have any children. Nelda Mae currently resides at the Rock Creek Manor Nursing Home in Washington, D.C.



Far left Muriel Ella Josephine Wheeler-Cuff-Goodman (1910-1991). Far right Catherine Wheeler-McFadden-Neal (1920-1986) both resided in Flint, Michigan until their deaths. They did not have any children.



Cecilia Alice Wheeler-Bruer 1905 - 1974

Cecilia Alice pictured top far left with her
Husband Pete Bruer (d). Mother of
Betty Lou Brown middle far left; Adelle
White center far left; Carl Lester Bruer
bottom far left; James Bruer center;
Jack Bruer; Grover Waller (d) far right;
Daniel Waller (d)





EVELYN MARIE WHEELER-CREEL 1909 - 1978

Born March 25, 1909 in Montgomery, West Virginia. She married the late Albert E. Creel, II in 1929. Mother of Albert E. Creel III pictured top far left; Phyllis J. Simpson pictured top far right; George P. Wheeler (d) pictured center bottom; Rev. Rubin L. Creel (d) pictured bottom left; Donald J. Creel (d) pictured bottom right. She resided forty-two years in Montgomery, West Virginia with her dear and close companion Mr. Oce Barron (d).



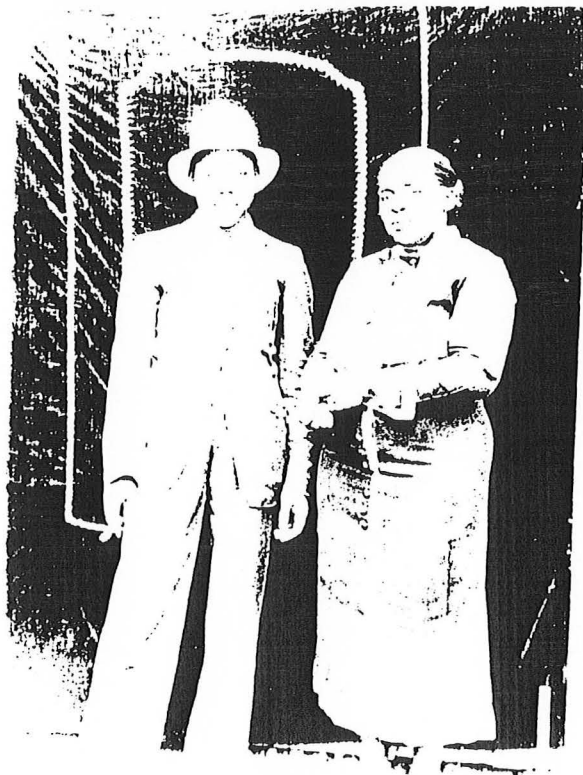
CARL LESTER WHEELER
- 1970

Carl Lester resided in Montgomery,
West Virginia until his death.
The father of one daughter Annie
Wheeler pictured left bottom.

GLADYS VICTORIA WHEELER
1912 - 1977

Gladys resided in Charleston
Charleston, West Virginia
until her death. She was
married to the late Daniel
Johnson. She did not have
any children.

BROTHER & SISTER



EUGENE LEROY S. WHEELER

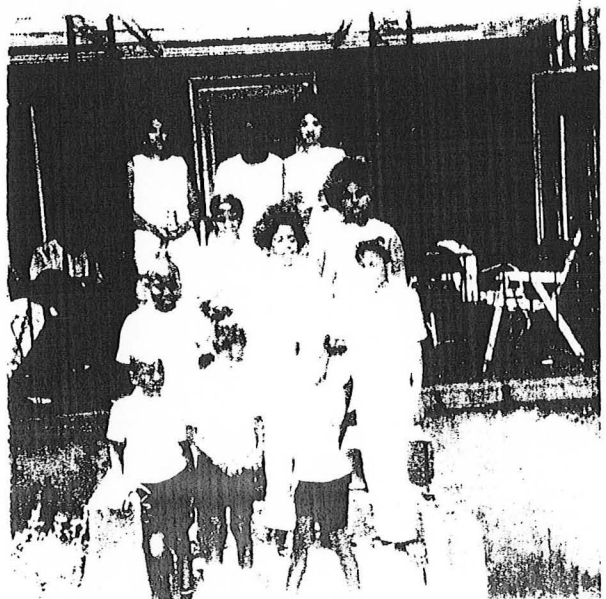
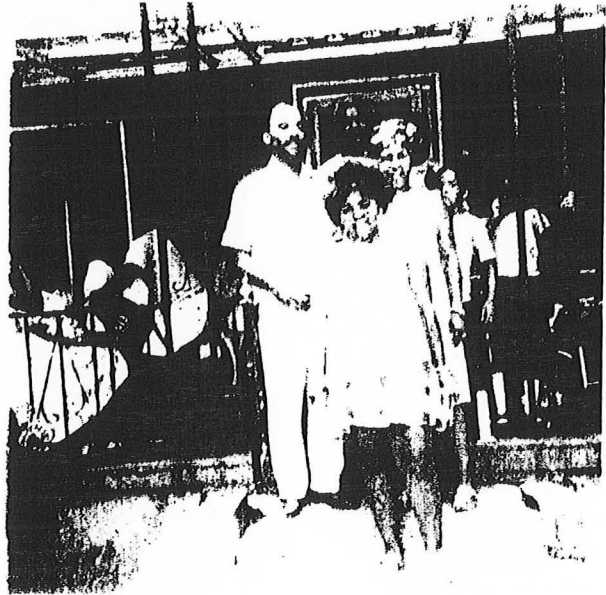
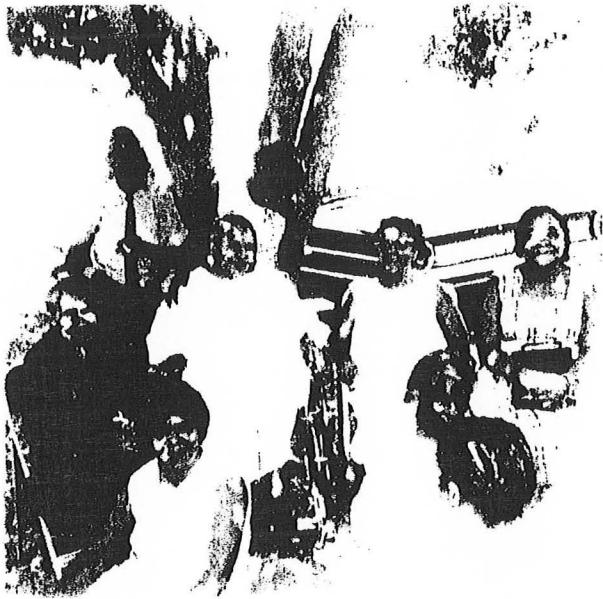
1915 – 1956



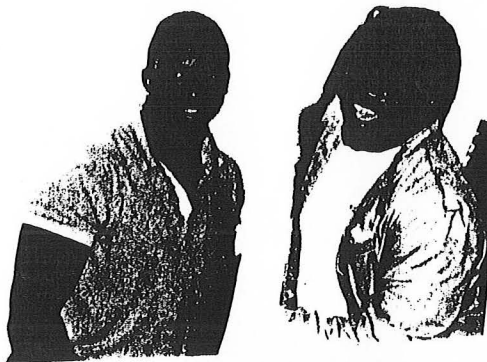
Eugene Wheeler resided in Cannellton, West Virginia until his death in 1956. He was married to the late Ethel Wheeler pictured top right. To this union five children were borne; Leroy Wheeler; Donald Earl "Donnie" Wheeler; Marva Wheeler; Lillian Wheeler; and Delores Wheeler-Craig "De De".

FIRST REUNION
JUNE 1968

Mothers, Fathers, Husbands, Wives, Brothers, Sisters, Aunts, Uncles
&
Grandchildren



BURKE - WHEELER FAMILY OFFSPRINGS



The
Bible has
in it 3,566,480
letters, 810,677
words, 31,175
verses, 1,189 chapters
and 66 books. The
longest chapter is the
119th Psalm. The short-
est and middle chapter is
the 117th Psalm. The middle
verse is the 8th verse of the
118th Psalm. The longest name
is in the 8th chapter of Isaiah,
verse 1, and contains 18 letters. The
word "and" occurs 46,627 times; the word
"Lord" 1,855 times. The 37th chapter of
Isaiah and the 19th chapter of II Kings
are alike. The longest verse is Esther 8:9,
the shortest verse is John 11:35. In Ezra
7:21 are all the letters of the alphabet except
the letter J. The finest piece of reading is Acts,
26th chapter. The name of God is not found in Esther.
The Bible contains knowledge, wisdom, the mind of God,
the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of the
sinner and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are
holy; its precepts are binding; its histories are true, and
its decisions are immutable. It contains light to guide you,
food to support you and comfort to cheer you. God was 2,500
years getting ready to write the Bible; 600 years writing it;
and has been 1999 years fulfilling it. The word "boy" occurs in the
Bible three times and the word "girl" two times. Christ is the
key to the entire book. Forty men were employed in its making.
It was written by doctors, farmers, fishers, kings, shepherds, old,
young, rich, poor, learned and unlearned. It is the traveler's map
the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass and the soldier's sword.

Do not neglect your Bible. It is a mine of wealth and
health to the soul and a river of pleasure. It is given
to you in this life and will be opened to you at the
judgement and it is established forever. If you want
a crown of rejoicing when Jesus returns to earth again,
read your Bible and lead lost souls to Christ and
you will have rich reward when He comes. II Tim-
othy 2:15 is the key that will
unlock the sacred Book to you.

Read,
hear,
keep
what
it con-
tains and
you will always
be happy and pros-
perous. (Revelation 1:3)